



UNIVERSITY of STRATHCLYDE
CENTRE FOR
ENVIRONMENTAL LAW
AND GOVERNANCE

COVID 19 Island Insights Series Final Report

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UNIVERSITY
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ISLAND

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INTRODUCTION AND EXECUTIVE

SUMMARY

This Island Insights project emerged as a result of a partnership between the University of Strathclyde's Centre for Environmental Law and Governance in Scotland and the Institute of Island Studies at the University of Prince Edward Island, Canada. It was later expanded to incorporate Island Innovation, a global media platform dedicated to sharing innovative projects and best practices. The objective of the project was to bring together critical assessments of how specific islands around the world have performed during the COVID-19 pandemic and the extent to which their recovery plans may promote resilience and sustainability in the long term. More specifically, it had three policy-related goals:

- 1) to shed light on islands' encounters with the COVID-19 pandemic in order to better equip all islands should a second wave hit them later in the year;
- 2) to provide an initial overview of the sectors of the economy and broader society that have been most adversely affected during the pandemic to focus post-COVID-19 recovery efforts; and
- 3) to assess post-COVID-19 recovery plans from the perspective of longer-term resilience and sustainability, including the spirit and letter of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), rather than an immediate back to "business as usual" outcome.

Based on the partners' existing networks, experts in Island Studies and cognate fields

throughout the world of islands were approached and asked to participate. Ultimately, 24 islands were represented in the final analysis, comprised of nine Small Island States (SIS) and 15 Subnational Island Jurisdictions (SNIJs). Although most attention has been focused on the experiences of nation-states, it was felt that the COVID experiences of the many politically semi-autonomous islands were just as important. In many of the existing analyses nationally and internationally, the voices of islanders on these subnational places have been muted or filtered within their respective national government responses. Although some of the pandemic experiences on these islands are similar to those experienced on small island states, SNIJs offer unique challenges and opportunities, including how they have coordinated public health and economic policies with surrounding jurisdictions and how they have adapted national-level health policies to particular small island contexts. A semi-autonomous political status may lead to benefits and costs with respect to the COVID-19 pandemic, attempting to achieve the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals and creating effective climate change policy.

Authors of the reports were asked to approach their analysis using a standard template of topics. Within about 2,000 words, they were asked to provide a statistical summary and timeline of COVID on their island, how the pandemic has been managed (e.g., lockdowns, travel restrictions), which elements of society and the economy have been most adversely affected, and how their islands may be

moving towards a more resilient and sustainable futures. Since these reports were completed and released in a staged approach from the Fall of 2020 to the Summer of 2021, they should be considered snapshots of COVID experiences at specific points in time during this pandemic and therefore may not necessarily reflect the current situations on many of these islands.

THEMES FROM THE COVID REPORTS

Reporting from other sources (e.g., the Johns Hopkins University tracking system) has shown that, in general, island governments have so far been quite successful in keeping the number of COVID cases and the mortality rates low compared to mainland jurisdictions. Reading the Reports contained herein show that the COVID pandemic experiences and policies across these two dozen islands are incredibly diverse. Despite this diversity, there are several overarching similarities: tourism, food security and governance.

The pandemic's impact on island tourism arrivals and revenues should come as no surprise given the importance of this sector on many islands prior to the pandemic and the overall effect of the pandemic on international travel. Perhaps more surprising, the decline in tourism was often met with ambivalence on islands. Although those directly impacted by tourism suffered economically, island residents spoke to the advantage of the absence of tourists; in part because it made them feel safer and also because it reminded them of an island life that is more balanced and less dependent on mass tourism. Some island governments put in place plans and actions to spread their tourism dependence across a greater number of subsets of the tourism market,

including appealing to domestic tourists through “staycations” and “digital nomads” who might stay for longer periods of time. Island governments engaged in greater regional cooperation to form “travel bubbles”, took greater care and attention to preserve cultural and physical environments, developed more comprehensive information and communications technology (ICT) infrastructure, and introduced greater democratization of the tourism decision-making process. Although island governments rarely spoke directly to achieving the SDGs in their policies, the spirit of the Sustainable Development Goals permeate much of their planning and implementation.

In the early stages of the pandemic, those islands that relied primarily on imported foods faced supply disruptions, food shortages and food price increases, all elements of food insecurity. These same supply disruptions also adversely affected the export of primary agricultural and seafood products. Those islands less dependent on mainland foods did not experience these same problems. These different experiences have led some island governments to rethink the issue of food security and resilience with the aim of making their islands agriculturally self-sustaining. Taken holistically, the need for self-sustenance has been reflected in the concept of food sovereignty, or the ability to create a healthy, ethical and just food system by giving a greater role to local food products and producers. Specific measure to achieve this goal include favouring locally produced foods, moving towards greener agricultural practices, and increasing small scale production.

Reviewing these Reports suggests that governance matters when responding to the

short- and long-term implications of the COVID pandemic. Some island governments recognized that their small scale makes them more vulnerable to broader economic slowdowns, so increasing the scope of their market by coordinating public health and economic policies with neighbouring jurisdictions may be mutually beneficial. There is also a social and mental health benefit to reaching out to neighbours through coordinated policy, since family and friends across neighbouring jurisdictions may be able to interact during the pandemic. Coordination of policy is not undertaken lightly, because it may mean giving up aspects of a place's political autonomy, even temporarily, in order to benefit from being part of this larger bubble. The tenuous nature of these bubbles is also dependent on similar COVID paths. If one or more of the partners has an outbreak, it is difficult to maintain this level of coordination. The Reports also reveal that some islands, and especially subnational islands, are being forced to adopt national public health policies that may not reflect local health care circumstances. This has prompted them to carve out policy for themselves that may diverge from that of mainland national or archipelagic jurisdictions around them.

Although not rising to the level of a general theme, some island governments are taking the COVID pandemic as an opportunity to

(re)start infrastructure programs supporting the growth of renewable energies and reducing fossil fuel consumption. In addition to reducing their greenhouse gas production, these policies will make them more resilient to future disruptions in fossil fuel delivery. Others are recognizing the importance of enhancing primary health care models that incorporate social determinants to health. If populations are healthier to begin with and are more conscientious about how their own personal choices influences the health of their communities, they will be better prepared for the next pandemic.

Finally, this series of Reports has shown that social problems from a pandemic may be just as important or more important than the economic challenges. Social and geographical inequalities come in many forms and have been exacerbated during the pandemic. For example, models of distance learning showed the impacts of a digital divide on rural children, the poor, and ethnic minorities. The same problems emerged when employees were being asked or required to work from home. Policies to improve the social safety net and provide basic services (e.g., internet connectivity, income supports, improving unemployment insurance and childcare) may become increasingly important to prevent inequalities from continuing to grow during future pandemics.

THEMATIC PRIMERS

TOURISM

What lessons can we learn from the responses to COVID-19 when taking islands forward towards greater sustainability? This is what the COVID19 Island Insights series has set for itself as a goal of the past year or so. In particular, we have attempted to come up with policy recommendations that build on the lessons from COVID-19. For each policy recommendation, we indicate the specific measure needed to implement the policy and the challenges and enablers for that policy and measure to succeed.

LOOKING BACK AT COVID-19

Prior to this pandemic, tourism was often a significant component of many island economies, cultures and physical environments. It was not uncommon for island governments to grapple with the benefits and challenges inherent in a high dependence on tourism. Therefore, it should not come as a surprise that the significant decline in international travel and associated lockdowns had particularly

Digital nomads in the Canary Islands

Which island is best for remote work?
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significant direct and indirect impacts on islands and their populations. Tourism-oriented businesses and governments lamented the loss of revenue associated with the reduction in the number of tourists, prompting most island governments to put in place short-term policies intended to support the tourism sector during the pandemic. Perhaps more surprising, island residents often expressed ambivalence to the short-term outcomes, including fearing the arrival of people potentially bringing Covid-19 and perceiving the absence of mass tourism as a refreshing reminder of a future that is “more balanced”. Picking up on this sentiment, some island governments have approached this time as an opportunity to rethink their long-term strategic approach to tourism, including making their islands more resilient to future external crises. Specific strategies include marketing to encourage local and domestic residents to vacation at home (i.e., “staycations”) and appealing to the so-called “digital nomads”, both to diversify the tourism base away from a mass tourism model dependent on external airlines and decision-makers.

Example: The Canary Islands

Thanks to a marketing strategy aimed at promoting itself as “the office with the best climate in the world”, the archipelago aspires to attract 30,000 remote workers and digital nomads within a one-year period. This requires a sophisticated marketing strategy, as well as investment in ICT infrastructure and health security. This has the added benefit of improving the quality of life of all its citizens, regardless of whether they are involved in the tourism sector.

On the other hand, the existing tourism stakeholders, including large corporations, small and medium enterprises (SMEs), and tourism business organisations in many jurisdictions are placing tremendous pressure on island governments to invest in returning to “normal” as soon as possible, even if this new normal rebuilds the vulnerabilities that existed prior to the pandemic.

LOOKING BEYOND COVID-19: Tourism Policy needed to move towards Greater Resilience and Sustainability

Against the backdrop of governments’ responses to COVID-19, island jurisdictions need to better understand the ways that they can maintain a healthy tourism sector while reducing their vulnerability to future external crises.

A range of specific measures have been adopted or recommended to achieve this goal, including:

- Recognizing that an investment in public health safety and disease prevention directly impacts the health of the tourism sector (see, for example, the World Travel and Tourism Council) (M1).
- Developing an effective and efficient ICT infrastructure attracts longer-term tourists, improves the Quality-of-Life of local citizens, and enables local businesses to be more competitive locally and internationally. Governments should develop and put in place Infrastructure Investment Plans that increase the digital footprint and reduce carbon emissions (see, for example, the Scottish government’s Convention of the Highlands and Islands) (M2).

- Increase regional cooperation and coordination of public health policies that has the spinoff benefit of increasing the geographic scope of the tourist and business markets during quarantine periods (see, for example, the Atlantic Canada and the Bailiwick Bubbles) (M3).
- Increase care and attention in maintaining the local cultural and physical environments which are appealing to local and global travellers alike (see, for example, the Mauritius Conscious Gift Card campaign; the Aotearoa/New Zealand Tiaki Promise to care and protect; and Hawai’i’s ‘Āina Aloha Economic Futures (AAEF) initiative) (M4).
- Promote greater democratization of the tourism decision-making process, wherein there is a genuine role for consultation and participation in tourism policy-making and program development by local populations and small and medium scale (local) enterprises (M5).

In developing their longer-term tourism visions, island governments rarely invoke the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as specific guiding principles. In addition, tourism is not specifically stated as an SDG. However, the spirit of the SDGs permeates governments’ tourism planning and actions. As a function of their context, small islands are inextricably linked to the boundaries of SDG 14 (life below water) and SDG 15 (life on land). A commitment to public health (M1) involves achieving SDG 3 (ensuring healthy lives and promoting well-being for all at all ages). Embracing M2 means achieving SDG 9 (building resilient infrastructure) and SDG 7

(ensuring access to affordable, reliable sustainable and modern energy for all). SDG 16 (building inclusive societies and effective and accountable institutions) and SDG 17 (strengthen the means to implement and revitalize global partnerships) are embodied in M3 and M5 at the local, national, and international scales. Finally, strengthening islands' local cultural and physical environments (M4) is linked to SDG 14 (e.g., restoring coral reefs, strengthening local fisheries), SDG 15 (e.g., strengthening local cultural values, institutions, symbols and artifacts).

Challenges and enablers in taking policies forward

As alluded to earlier, there are powerful institutions and stakeholders (large and small) that are more interested in building back the former tourist economy, regardless of whether this means building back "better". In the short term, it is less costly to rebuild what was lost and seek out the same groups of tourists at even higher numbers to make up for lost revenue during the COVID-19 pandemic. However, we are already seeing that this plan is running into problems. Not only is the pandemic continuing to adversely affect long-distance travel (i.e., much of the world remains unvaccinated, and variants are dampening recovery plans), but tourists are becoming more discerning, and it is becoming more difficult to assemble a labour force within the hospitality sector that is willing to come back to a low-wage, seasonal, disposable working environment. These challenges also point to the importance of enablers. Rebuilding a tourism environment that is exactly the same as that which existed prior to COVID-19 is at least partly a function of a failure to disseminate information on alternative tourism models to local populations, small scale business owners and

locally-based institutions. Enablers, whether they are found in the public, private or not-for-profit sectors, are those that can present alternative visions to the public at large.

Caveat

All islands are different, and the policy recommendation sketched in this brief will apply in different ways to different islands based on, for example, the extent to which they are independent states or SNIJs, or whether they are single islands, archipelagic States or part of States with a mainland. The partners of the COVID-19 Island Insights Series are keen to work with island policy makers to fine tune the policy recommendations provided in this brief, should this be of interest.

FOOD SECURITY

What lessons can we learn from the responses to COVID-19 when positioning islands to become more sustainable? This is what the COVID-19 Island insights series had set itself as a goal over the past year. In particular, we have attempted to distil policy recommendations that build on the lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic. For each policy recommendation, we indicate the specific measure(s) needed to implement the policy and the challenges and enablers involved for that policy and measure to succeed.

Example of Mauritius and other islands

Mauritius faced a major threat to food security because of shortages of supplies from the mainland. Seventy percent of Mauritius's food comes from the mainland. The first lockdown in 2020 saw shortages of food in the market accompanied by a steep rise in prices. However, locally produced tropical foods which were usually sold to hospitality businesses for tourists were now being sold in the local markets, consequently allowing locals to consume food which was richer in nutritional value and locally sourced.

Other islands, less dependent on the mainland – because of size, ecosystems, and/or local practices – did not experience food shortages to the same degree and could continue to rely on their local food sources. Finally, some islands went through changes in

LOOKING BACK AT COVID-19

COVID-19 and responses thereto have been a reminder of the importance food security has for islands and of how dependent food security is on the specific characteristics of each island.

Some islands rely primarily on imports from the mainland for the bulk of their food supply and have therefore faced threats of food shortages as a result of lockdowns, supply chain disruptions and travel restrictions. This has resulted in the rise of market retail prices of basic/staple food rations, consequently affecting the consumption and lifestyles of the local population.



image copyright: @mauritiusagriculture community

local consumption habits that led to a deeper understanding of their potential and actual food resilience by turning consumption towards locally-sourced products and rediscovering agricultural patterns and traditions.

Example of New Zealand and linked Pacific Ocean islands

Cook, Niue and Tokelau islands, all of which are linked economically, demographically and politically to New Zealand, depended largely on imported (mainly processed) food. Due to the strict restrictions imposed by NZ, the patterns of food consumption on these islands changed. It was noted that there was an increase in consumption of locally sourced foods and a decrease in the dependence on imported processed food.



image © [Rafael Ben Ari](#) | ID 34762151 | Dreamstime.com

The perceived need for self-sustenance of islands to ensure food security has shown the necessity to move towards the realization of a more holistic concept that food security: that of *food sovereignty*. This latter concept involves the ability to create a healthy, ethical and just food system through an enhanced role of local food products and producers.

LOOKING BEYOND COVID-19: Food Security Policy Needed to Move Towards Greater Resilience and Sustainability

Against the backdrop of COVID-19 and islands' responses thereto, island jurisdictions need to: better understand local needs and opportunities and, where possible, incentivize and promote production and consumption of local produce.

A range of specific measures are needed to implement the above-mentioned policy, including:

- Bolstering locally produced food, through: (M1)
 - better understanding of the potentialities and challenges of local food production;
 - better understanding of the specific techniques/methods needed for local food production.
- Moving towards greener agricultural and farming practices, through: (M2)
 - shortening supply chains;
 - providing special financial incentives for organic agriculture/farming;
 - increasing the use of locally-sourced seed varieties, local animal species and breeds.
- Increasing small scale production, through: (M3)
 - creating rural development schemes to enhance small scale (family/community-based) local production and consumption of food;
 - providing funding and financial assistance to encourage locals to invest in Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises;
 - providing facilities that allow traditional food handling practices.
- For islands with a strong tourism presence, balancing the food needs of the tourism sector with that of the local population through the promotion of the use of local products (local branding, local recipes, etc) (M4).

In order to guarantee local food security and

increase island resilience, M1 are essential measures to set locally, island-tailored paths ahead towards the achievement of greater food security and sovereignty. M2 would move islands on a path in line with the SDGs, particularly Goals 2 and 8, guaranteeing long term solutions able to promote the conservation of local ecosystems and biodiversity. M3 will further incentivize SDGs 2 and 8, by increasing local resilience and the ability to respond to crises, enhancing the production of diverse foods encompassed within the cultural and social practices of each island, and creating as well as sustaining new jobs. Finally, M4 is essential in order to avoid food quality inconsistencies and food wastage during crises.

Challenges and enablers in taking policies forward

A key challenge in the development of the measures needed to implement the above-mentioned food security/sovereignty policy is the diversity of islands' geographies and ecosystems, as the ability to respond to local food needs is strongly dependent on local weather, soil, and species varieties. In certain cases, stronger and better tailored supply chains with the mainland or with other islands might be a necessary step to increase, as a first step, food security.

Caveat

All islands are different, and the policy recommendation sketched in this brief will apply in different ways to different islands based on, for example, the extent to which they are independent states or SNIJs, or whether they are single islands, archipelagic States or part of States with a mainland. The partners of the COVID-19 Island Insights Series are keen to work with island policy makers to fine tune the policy recommendations provided in this brief, should this be of interest.

GOVERNANCE

What lessons can we learn from the responses to COVID-19 when positioning islands to become more sustainable? This is what the COVID-19 Island insights series had set itself as a goal over the past year. In particular, we have attempted to distil policy recommendations that build on the lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic. For each policy recommendation, we indicate the specific measure(s) needed to implement the policy and the challenges and enablers involved for that policy and measure to succeed.

Example: The Atlantic Canada bubble.

The Atlantic Bubble was a special travel-restricted area created in 2020 during the pandemic. The area was agreed to by the four Atlantic Canadian provinces and allowed unrestricted travel among provincial residents and restricted travel for residents of outside provinces. Those wishing to travel from outside the Atlantic Bubble were subjected to screening and quarantine for 14 days before moving freely throughout the bubble. The provinces in the bubble have seen the lowest rates of COVID-19 compared to other Canadian provinces throughout the pandemic. This initiative has not been without its challenges; and the bubble has burst and been reborn several times.

On the other hand, one of the challenges faced by island governments, and especially subnational island jurisdictions (SNIJs) that share decision-making powers with external national governments, was reconciling blanket national or regional public health regulations that may not have reflected local circumstances. COVID-19

LOOKING BACK AT COVID-19

COVID-19 and responses thereto have been a reminder of the importance of governance for islands. On the one hand, some islands opted to adopt shared and complementary policies with other islands or mainland territories in order to better cope with the pandemic. By creating so called “bubbles” some island jurisdictions were able to coordinate public health and access policies during the pandemic with neighbouring islands and the mainland to increase their geographic scope. This had both economic and psychological benefits. However, in order to do so, islands need to have the normative power and the authority to attach themselves to other islands and territories.

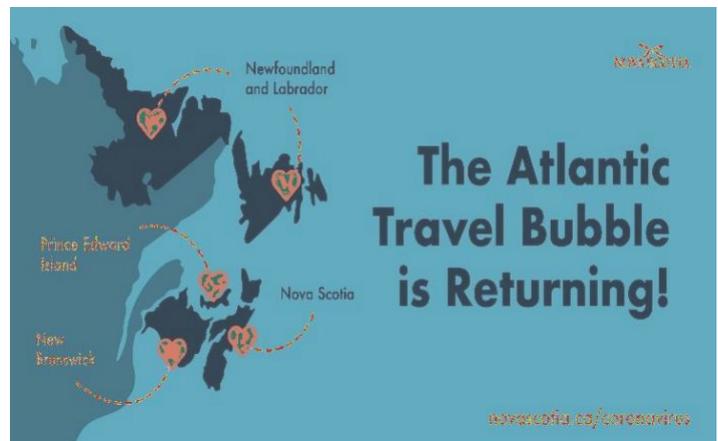


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highlighted the need to respond to unique local contexts. A prerequisite to satisfying this need is for islands, and especially SNIJs, to have the necessary normative powers to be able to carve out policy for themselves that may diverge from their larger national mainland political entity or even other islands in archipelagic States.

Example: Åland Islands – deepening of Åland democracy during national emergencies.

The Development and Sustainability Council underpins Ålandic democracy providing an effective bottom-up process whereby individual citizens and communities are effectively empowered. During the pandemic, the Council carried out a series of citizens' panels reflecting on "what has the Corona crisis taught us? What are we prepared to leave behind now, and what are we missing?"

The Åland Government has explicitly said it will take the results of these panels into account when deciding upon measures to navigate Åland to a "new normal", the road to recovery.



Image copyright: Members of the Finnish Parliament attend a debate for the EU COVID-19 recovery plan during a session in Helsinki, Finland May 12, 2021. Lehtikuva/Emmi Korhonen/via REUTERS

LOOKING BEYOND COVID-19:

Governance Policy Needed to Move Towards Greater Resilience and Sustainability

Against the backdrop of COVID-19 and island responses thereto, island jurisdictions need to fully appreciate the opportunities and challenges stemming from their governance framework. In particular, because sustainability is better understood publicly at a local level, it will be important that island jurisdictions develop normative powers needed to both liaise efficiently with neighbouring islands and mainland territories while at the same time reclaiming the flexibility required to align with local needs and contexts.

A range of specific measures are needed to implement the above-mentioned policy:

- Fully appreciate the Sustainable Development Goals and proceed to embed them in local contexts (M1)
- Better understand the linkages between local sustainability and island-based contexts and environments (M2)

- Better understand the linkages between local sustainability and the similarities and differences across neighbouring islands and mainland territories (M3)
- Assess the normative landscape allowing or impeding the development of local island-based responses, including changes in governance relationships with other islands and mainland territories (M4)
- Based on the above-mentioned studies, develop a roadmap that will enable islands to build on existing normative powers or explore means to secure such normative powers (M5)

M1 can benefit from global initiatives such as the Local 2030 Islands Hub whose goal is to help islands localise the SDGs. Positive examples stemming from Hawai'i and Guam can be used as good practices. M2, M3 and M4 require research capacity that should be, as far as possible, island-based. Each measure should lead to a report that will provide island policy makers with the necessary information to decide whether and how to pursue M5. The latter will require input from the island communities to gauge interest

in giving the island more powers. A transparent and effective public participation process should be put in place to incorporate the island community voice(s) in any roadmap. The latter could, but does not have to necessarily, lead to a piece of legislation whose goal is to provide island communities with the possibility of adjusting (i.e., “island proofing”) decisions made elsewhere that can negatively affect islands and their communities.

Challenges and enablers in taking forward such policy

A key challenge in the development of the measures needed to implement the above-mentioned governance policy is the extent to which an island is “locked into” existing

normative frameworks that do not allow it to have a strong voice. A further challenge could be the lack of human resources and capacity to undertake the research needed to carry out the studies that are being suggested.

Caveat

All islands are different, and the policy recommendation sketched in this brief will apply in different ways to different islands based on, for example, the extent to which they are independent states or SNIJs, or whether they are single islands, archipelagic States or parts of States with a shared mainland. The partners of the COVID-19 Island Insights Series are keen to work with island policy makers to fine tune the policy recommendations provided in this brief.



Indian Ocean

Small Island States

Mauritius
Seychelles





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AND GOVERNANCE



UNIVERSITY
of Prince Edward
ISLAND



COVID-19 Island Insights Series

No. 9, February 2021

Mauritius

Verena Tandrayen Ragoobur

The COVID-19 Island Insights Series is an initiative spearheaded by the Strathclyde Centre for Environmental Law & Governance (SCELG) and the Institute of Island Studies (IIS) at the University of Prince Edward Island in collaboration with Island Innovation. The initiative brings together critical assessments of how specific islands around the world have performed during the COVID-19 pandemic and the extent to which their recovery plans can promote resilience and sustainability in the long term.

For more information on SCELG see
<https://www.strath.ac.uk/scelg>

For more information about the IIS see
<http://islandstudies.com/>

For further information about Island Innovation see
<https://www.islandinnovation.co/>

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Mauritius is an island nation in the Indian Ocean about 2,000 kilometres off the southeast coast of the African continent.

The outlying islands of Rodrigues, Agaléga and St. Brandon also belong to the Republic of Mauritius.

Population 1,265,475¹

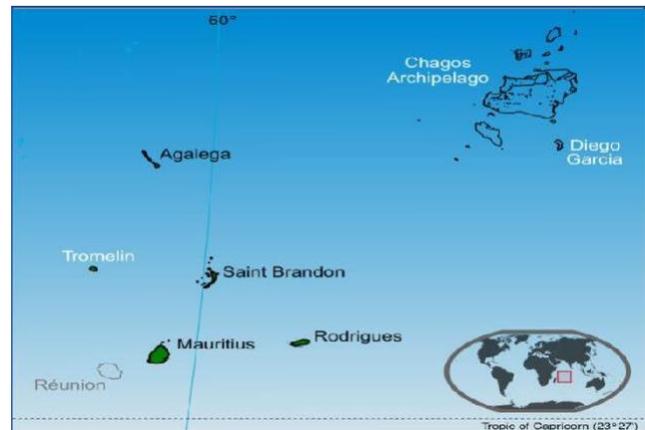
Size 2,040 km²(of which Mauritius is 1,864 km² and Rodrigues is 104 km²)²

Verena Tandrayen Ragoobur

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COVID-19 data and timeline (as of 31st January 2021)

- Number of cases 569 [0.045% of the population]
- Number of fatalities 10 [0.000008%]
- Schools closed on 20 March 2020 and reopened in 01 July 2020.
- Travel restrictions enacted on 20 March 2020 are still present



Mauritius³

¹ Data obtained from "Population and Vital Statistics - Year 2019". *Statistics Mauritius*. March 2020.

² <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mauritius>

³ <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mauritius>

COVID-19 on Mauritius

In Mauritius, precautionary measures against COVID-19 were taken early on. Starting on 22 January 2020, health authorities screened passengers on arrival from a growing number of countries. On 24 January, all passengers irrespective of their nationality, travelling from Wuhan City, Hubei Province of China or who had visited Wuhan during the previous 14 days, were immediately quarantined for at least 14 days; and those who were showing signs and symptoms of the infection upon arrival at the airport were immediately admitted to the isolation ward of the New Souillac Hospital. Tourists who were suspected of being infected were sent to quarantine in early February with results from tests sent to Germany and South Africa for confirmation. As of 23 February, passengers on arrival from infected regions were denied entry, culminating with entry denied for foreigners from Réunion, the EU, the UK, Norway and Switzerland starting on 16 March. These early precautionary measures have contributed to a relatively small pool of cases when the first three cases were announced on 18 March.

Two days later, on 20 March 2020, the island was under "sanitary" lockdown for two weeks. During the lockdown, only essential services (e.g., police, hospitals, dispensaries, private clinics, firefighters) and specific economic activities (e.g., shops, banks, supermarkets, bakeries, pharmacies) and minimum public transport service was operational. From 24 to 31 March, the country went under complete lockdown with only essential services being open. No other activities were opened during the curfew period, including supermarkets, shops and bakeries. Health officials and members of the Government reported the number of COVID-19 cases on a daily basis through the media. The Government also announced severe penalties for breaking the confinement measures and for issuing fake news related to the pandemic. Fake news was spread on the number of COVID-19 cases through social media and these were seen to be likely to create a climate of fear and put pressure on health services. For example,

a man was arrested by the Central Criminal Investigation Department for publishing on social media that a supermarket and a police station were under attack during the lockdown. The Cybercrime Unit of the Police Force stated that those found guilty of having disseminated false news on the COVID-19 virus risk a maximum prison sentence of 10 years and a fine of up to Rs 1 million for each false news broadcast.

This lockdown was extended until 15 April, then again until 4 May and finally a third time to 1 June, with a gradual reopening of certain economic sectors starting from 15 May. The lockdown was lifted entirely on 15 June. Consequently, beaches, markets, gyms, parks, village halls, community centres, cinema and other public places became accessible to the public but the wearing of masks and social distancing were still compulsory. Schools resumed on 1 July 2020. As of 27 August, the number of PCR tests carried out stood at 67,094 while the number of Rapid Antigen Tests was 160,315, totalling 227,409 COVID-19 tests, representing around 18% of the population being tested.

Mauritius has been COVID-19 free with no local cases since 26 April 2020. The island had only one local case in November 2020 but since then there have been no new local cases. In a health curfew for more than two months, Mauritius had a contamination rate below the WHO forecasts. The WHO predicted more than 20,000 cases and 1,139 deaths in the over 60 age group. At the end of May 2020, the island had recorded 332 coronavirus confirmed cases, all recovered, and 10 deaths. With less than 3% of the infected population, Mauritius is one of the few jurisdictions in the Indian Ocean which has been able to control the progress of the pandemic. Rodrigues Island recorded no cases and the public health confinement there only lasted 14 days. With no local cases for the past months, the government stated that Mauritius is now a COVID-19 safe destination. As at 31 August 2020, Mauritius had 356 cases; the additional cases (24 in all) were essentially imported cases from the repatriation of Mauritians from different parts of the world. As of that date, there are 1,211 repatriated Mauritians in quarantine. The Mauritian government received the help of

several hotels around the island, with at least 1,700 hotel rooms being provided to place people under quarantine.

Key socioeconomic pressures in Mauritius during COVID-19

On 18 March 2020, once the lockdown was announced, all in-bound passengers, including Mauritians and foreigners, were prohibited from entering Mauritian territory. Many locals were stranded in different airports around the world. This created much frustration and anxiety amongst locals whose relatives were stuck in several airports. Mauritian authorities managed to repatriate around 1,000 Mauritians at the beginning of April. Once these repatriates entered the Mauritian territory, they were required to spend 14 days in quarantine. The repatriation process continued until the end of September 2020.

Amid the lockdown and curfew order in force and the decision to close all supermarkets, shops and bakeries until 31 March 2020, the population of Mauritius was under pressure and strained by the possible lack of food supplies. The Government reassured the population that there was no need to panic as there was no shortage in the supply of commodities such as flour, rice, fuel and cooking gas on the market and exhorted each Mauritian to demonstrate a strong sense of responsibility during the curfew period. There were also efforts from a number of companies to provide services for online buying and home delivery. Many companies, however, did not have the proper logistics and could not deliver in time to meet the growing demand of the Mauritian population. In many instances, prices of basic commodities escalated, making people, and especially low-income people, more vulnerable in this challenging time.

In addition, many people in Mauritius operate in the informal sector or are self-employed with low wages on a daily or weekly basis. These

low-income earners have been most vulnerable to the COVID-19 pandemic and were the most affected during the lockdown, owing to their inability to work and feed their families. Hence, a total of 35,000 households enlisted on the Social Register of Mauritius⁴, including persons with disabilities, those receiving the Carers' Allowance and residents of homes received food packs. There was also an appeal to distributors, supermarkets and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), amongst others, to join in the efforts of the government to provide vulnerable families with the basic necessities. On 2 April, Mauritians could enter supermarkets as per alphabetical order of their names during specific days. It was compulsory to bring their National Identity cards and wear masks, and basic essential products were limited to three units per person. This eased the tension considerably but there were still long queues and panic-buying in many instances.

In terms of medical supplies, Mauritius received a donation by the founder of Alibaba Group, Jack Ma, at the end of March 2020. His donation consisted of 20,000 COVID-19 screening kits, 100,000 masks and 1,000 protective suits for medical personnel. The African Union ensured that these supplies were delivered to the 54 African countries who benefited from this aid. India also sent 13 tonnes of medication and 500,000 Hydroxychloroquine tablets to Mauritius. Mauritius was among the first countries to receive supplies of this medicine after a special exemption was granted by India. In addition, 231 tonnes of equipment, including masks, overalls and other protective accessories for healthcare staff from Guangzhou and Beijing reached Mauritius at the start of April⁵. The Mauritius Export Association (MEXA) reported that its members had already produced 300,000 protective masks against COVID-19. A mobile application named "beSafeMoris" was launched by the Ministry of Information Technology, Communication and Innovation and the Ministry of Health and Wellness. The app provides the latest news along

⁴ SRM is a computer-based application to register and identify the poor and vulnerable people. It uses a Proxy Means Test (PMT) to determine eligibility below a given threshold.

⁵ <http://www.govmu.org/English/News/Pages/Mauritius-receives-second-shipment-of-medicine-supplies-from-India.aspx>

with measures to prevent the proliferation of the virus. The government also set up the COVID-19 Solidarity Fund, which will help people affected by the pandemic. The European Union contributed MUR 11.3 million (USD 282,000) to the Solidarity Fund.

The Government implemented major social policies during the COVID-19 pandemic. These included the Wage Assistance Scheme (WAS) and the Self-Employment Assistance Scheme (SEAS). The former targets businesses in the private sector and their employees drawing a monthly basic wage of up to Rs 50,000 (USD 1,250). The SEAS in turn assists self-employed persons who have suffered a loss in revenue because of the lockdown. The purpose of the two schemes is to cushion the socioeconomic impact of COVID-19 by providing financial support to employees who have become unemployed on a temporary basis, as well as those who are employed in informal sectors or self-employed. From mid-March to the end of June, the Government paid out MUR 8.2 billion of WAS to more than 268,000 workers in 14,700 companies. Further, more than 197,000 self-employed Mauritian received MUR 2.4 billion over the same period. A total of 10.6 billion rupees (265 million USD) had been disbursed under the two employment assistance programs to companies and self-employed people. The Government has decided to maintain both schemes for workers in the tourism industry as long as the borders are closed.

Post Covid-19 recovery on Mauritius: A different approach

Mauritius has been responding relatively well as compared to a number of other international islands and other jurisdictions. The various statistics (including total number of cases, death rate, closed cases, COVID tests performed, among others) tend to point out that the Mauritian “Act fast. Act now. Keep the lights on” approach has been relatively effective in limiting

the spread of the disease (De Melo, Tandrayen-Ragoobur and Seetanah, 2020)⁶. Mauritius continues to implement strict measures to avoid any further spread or second wave. Physical and social distancing measures, daily screening of body temperature, cleaning and disinfection of premises or sites, use of hand sanitizers and the wearing of masks remain in force. In June 2020, the Government set out its budget themed “*Our New Normal: The Economy of Life*”, which aimed to guide the economy and population on the path to healing and growth during these times of global and local economic slowdown, rising unemployment and low morale caused by the pandemic. The objective was to build an innovative and favourable environment for local and foreign investors. The Bank of Mauritius set up the Mauritius Investment Corporation (MIC) as a special-purpose vehicle to mitigate contagion of the ongoing economic downturn to the banking sector, thus limiting macro-economic and financial risks. The MIC has taken shape following extensive consultations with major economic and systemic operators in the tourism and manufacturing sectors and is critical for rebuilding the economy. The tourism sector, however, remains the most severely impacted by the pandemic with both direct and indirect implications on those who depend on tourism for a living.

Post Covid-19 recovery and the Sustainable Development Goals

For several decades, Mauritius has been highly dependent on the tourism sector as a major revenue generating industry and an important sector of employment creation. However, this sudden halt in the tourism sector has gravely impacted small local businesses, workers in the tourism industry, the self-employed as well as informal employees operating in that sector.

To bridge the gap between sustainable economic growth and inclusive employment, in May 2020 Mauritius Conscious Travel launched

⁶ <https://voxeu.org/article/covid-19-mauritius-and-other-tourist-paradises>

the Conscious Gift Card campaign. It features an array of immersive activities to choose from such as wild adventures, local guided tours, epic island getaways and immersive learning experiences. It is an empowering initiative that encourages travellers, both locals and global citizens, to support small Mauritian tourism businesses, to preserve the local expertise and reactivate the economy. This initiative aims at promoting sustainability while ensuring communities recover from COVID-19⁷. Strengthening the tourism pillar by building and projecting an 'environmentally friendly' image is very important. Though Mauritius has been putting forward the Wage Assistance Scheme to discourage firms from laying off workers, it is becoming increasingly unsustainable for firms to continue with their reduced activities and they may actually close down in the coming months. These schemes may not be sustainable in the long run.

In addition, like other Small Island Developing States (SIDS) Mauritius depends heavily on imported goods, and in particular fossil fuels, to power its economy. In effect, 84% of the nation's primary energy requirements are met by imported fossil fuels like oil and coal. The energy sector alone accounts for 62% of Mauritius' total greenhouse gas emissions (UNDP, 2020). The economic crisis triggered by COVID-19 speaks to the urgency for Mauritius to invest in clean energy alternatives to ensure energy security, a goal that is also vital for job creation and poverty alleviation. The post COVID-19 recovery will necessitate a long-term, reliable electricity supply to support businesses and boost the economy. Hence, as part of the low carbon economy project, Mauritius is finalising a National Grid Code, which will ensure that the electricity grid operates in a safe, reliable and economically viable way.

Mauritius has unfortunately not addressed the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) during the COVID-19 pandemic. Measures put forward have concentrated primarily on short-term

policies to prevent the layoff of workers or closures of businesses. However, as suggested by the renewable energy and the local tourism gift card initiatives noted above, there is a recognition that there is a need for a long term strategy for sustainable development. A sustained commitment by all actors is vital to reduce the vulnerability of Mauritius on economic, social, and environmental issues.

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COVID-19 Island Insights Series

No. 10, February 2021

Seychelles

Malshini Senaratne

The COVID-19 Island Insights Series is an initiative spearheaded by the Strathclyde Centre for Environmental Law & Governance (SCELG) and the Institute of Island Studies (IIS) at the University of Prince Edward Island in collaboration with Island Innovation. The initiative brings together critical assessments of how specific islands around the world have performed during the COVID-19 pandemic and the extent to which their recovery plans can promote resilience and sustainability in the long term.

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The Republic of Seychelles comprises an archipelago of 115 islands located in the Indian Ocean.

The population is 98,462¹

The size of the country is 458.4 km²

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COVID-19 data and timeline

The first imported case was detected on 14 March 2020.

Number of confirmed cases until 23 January, 2021 is 972 (0.0098 per capita).

Number of fatalities until 23 January, 2021 is 3 (0.00003 per capita).

Schools closed on 19 March 2020 and re-opened on 11 May 2020.

Travel restrictions were enacted in April 2020. The International Airport re-opened to commercial flights on 01 August 2020.



Seychelles²

¹ NBS, Population and Vital Statistics: 31 August 2020 <https://www.nbs.gov.sc/downloads/mid-2020-population-bulletin/viewdocument>.

² Map downloaded from <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Seychelles#/media/File:Se-map.gif>.

COVID-19 on the Seychelles

The COVID-19 pandemic reached the shores of the Seychelles islands in March 2020.³ By 06 April, the total number of confirmed cases had climbed to 11, and the government announced a 21-day lockdown on travel and movement two days later.⁴

During the lockdown, a number of measures restricting the movement of the residents were implemented.⁵ Non-essential businesses were ordered to shut down and only employees of essential services were allowed outdoor movement. All shops except those that sold food items, pharmaceutical products and groceries were to remain closed. Travel services between the islands were restricted to carrying out and the transportation of staff associated with essential services. The measures extended into other spheres as well. Cruise ships were banned from calling at Port Victoria until 2022. All flights operating at the Seychelles International Airport were halted. Child-minding and educational institutions were closed and a night-time curfew was also imposed. The restrictions were supplemented with increased public health communication promotions and campaigns which aimed to sensitise the population around COVID-19. Social distancing, frequent hand washing and face mask wearing were encouraged by the authorities.

Following no new cases being recorded during the lockdown period, the country announced a gradual lifting of containment measures on 04 May.⁶ Notably, all restrictions on the movement of residents were removed. Religious services

– previously banned – were able to resume under the guidance of the Department of Health. All shops were allowed to extend their opening hours until 8:00 pm. Lastly, the majority of services and businesses were also allowed to reopen. Child-minding and day-care services and the post-secondary institutions re-opened from 11 May. As no new cases were recorded in the period immediately following the removal of restrictions, the government declared the islands COVID-free in May 2020.⁷ However, the reopening of Seychelles' airport and fishing waters saw a spike in imported cases in June, emanating mainly from seafarers on Spanish fishing vessels. Eventually, 183 cases were confirmed as of December 2020.⁸ The country also saw its first case of community transmission on 30 December, and subsequently implemented a series of measures aimed at curbing the spread. This included keeping all schools closed, restricting public gatherings and once again closing spas, stand-alone restaurants, cinemas, casinos and gyms.⁹ The first COVID-related death in Seychelles was also recorded on January 03, 2021. In light of the recent spike in cases and two more deaths since, the government has re-imposed some of the measures enacted in April 2020, but has not called for a total lockdown yet.¹⁰

Key economic and social impacts of the COVID-19 outbreak in Seychelles

The Seychelles economy consists mainly of two key sectors; tourism and fisheries. The country's gross domestic product (GDP) was poised to grow by 3.3 per cent in 2020 prior to the

³ Information retrieved on 08th December from the Travel Daily News website, <https://www.traveldailynews.com/post/paradise-seychelles-is-covid-19-free>

⁴ Information retrieved on 08th December from the Medical Xpress website, <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2020-05-cases-seychelles-confinement.html>

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⁸ Information retrieved on 08th December from the Ministry of Health website <http://www.health.gov.sc/>

⁹ Information retrieved on 1st Jan from the Seychelles Nation, <http://www.nation.sc/articles/7390/covid-19-first-cases-of-community-transmission-confirmed>

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COVID-19 pandemic.¹¹ Much of this growth was anticipated from increased activity in the information and telecommunication sector, with tourism remaining the principal contributor to GDP at a growth rate of 5 per cent.¹² Additionally, the country had been following a prudent monetary policy stance that was successfully reigning in inflation, and the government was on target to reduce its debt to GDP ratio by 50 per cent in 2021 through added fiscal discipline¹³. At the end of 2019, Seychelles recorded the highest GDP in Africa of nearly USD17 billion.¹⁴

However, the island nation's overt reliance on these narrow economic bases has exposed its extreme vulnerability to external shocks such as this global pandemic.¹⁵ The tourism sector is the mainstay of the economy, contributing over 80 per cent to GDP and employing over 25 per cent of the country's working population.¹⁶ In 2019, visitor arrivals to the Seychelles totalled 384,204, surpassing the 4 per cent target set by the Seychelles Tourism Board.¹⁷ This represented more than three times the islands' population. The fisheries sector is also crucial, employing 17 per cent of the population, thereby making important contributions to the economy and the export market, income and livelihoods.¹⁸

The pandemic significantly affected these two sectors, which led to a ripple effect throughout the entire economy. A dearth of tourists left hoteliers running at a loss with significant overheads, staff layoffs and empty beds.¹⁹ The country recorded only 75,000 visitor arrivals in the first three quarters of 2020, translating into a drop of almost 83 per cent from 2019.²⁰ Government figures also revealed 1,100 people had lost their jobs since the start of the year, mostly in the tourism sector.²¹

As the tourism sector contracted, fisheries and other supporting industries suffered in tandem. Redundancies emanated from industries related to food services activities, accommodation as well as in administrative and support services such as car rental and taxi service businesses.²² In the third quarter of 2020, the national unemployment rate was recorded at 4 per cent. A new category called 'not employed' was subsequently added to the labour force status categories, to classify those whose work has stopped, as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. The government estimates the unemployment rate would have stood at 6.5 per cent if those affected by the COVID-19 situation had started seeking alternative employment, rather than waiting for the lessened (work-related) impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.²³ The country

¹¹ Information retrieved on 08th December from the African Development Bank website, AfDB,

<https://www.afdb.org/en/countries/east-africa-seychelles/seychelles-economic-outlook>

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¹⁸ Senaratne, M. 2020. The Blue Economy: charting a new development path in Seychelles. Retrieved at

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²³ Ibid

has since experienced foreign exchange fluctuations, rising cost of imported goods that support industries and has relied on a number of international institutions such as the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank for emergency financial assistance to deal with the crisis.

The pandemic has served to exacerbate notable societal vulnerabilities that already existed in the Seychelles. Despite attaining high-income country status in 2015, the small island state had recorded an alarming poverty rate of 39.3 per cent two years prior. Further, it had a Gini index of 0.47 which demonstrated a significant problem of inequality.²⁴ In 2016, a national study found the reported gender-based violence (GBV) rate in the country to be quite high, with 57.7 per cent of women and 43.1 per cent of men reporting experiencing violence.²⁵ More recently, a national study in 2020 revealed 12 per cent of the population in Seychelles was multi-dimensionally poor, thus experiencing deprivations in the spheres of employment, health, education and living standards.²⁶ While the data remains to be forthcoming, it is highly likely the pandemic will paint an even more dire portrait of the country's socio-economic landscape in 2021.

Post Covid-19 world: resilience and sustainability

Building back better around sustainability, diversification and increased resilience should signpost Seychelles' pathway in a post-COVID world. To that end, the country's national vision around a 'resilient, responsible and prosperous nation of healthy, educated and empowered Seychellois' reflects a general harmonisation with the triple-bottom outcomes embedded within the Sustainable Development Goals.²⁷

Nonetheless, the island nation has remained mindful that development needs to happen within the Seychelles context. Through the launch of its Blue Economy (BE) Strategic Policy Framework and Roadmap in 2018, Seychelles focused on developing its ocean space, opting for a model that was based on the pillars of social equity, sustainable economic growth and environmental conservation.²⁸ Some results have been notable; in 2019, the country launched the world's first sovereign blue bond, proceeds of which are used to finance the island nation's BE journey.²⁹ Additionally, the archipelago recently declared 30 per cent of its ocean territory a Marine Protected Area (MPA), meeting international targets 10 years ahead of schedule.³⁰ Moving forward, a more holistic approach to BE has been called for, with stakeholders noting an urgent need to pivot from a fisheries resource base to a more value-addition and knowledge-based economy.³¹

²⁴Information retrieved on 08th December from the Seychelles Voluntary National Review Report 2020, https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/26383VNR_2020_Seychelles_Report.pdf

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On the plus side, the pandemic has demonstrated the ability of most governments and international institutions to respond quickly and cohesively in the face of an overwhelming public health threat. Such a response will also be crucial in the planet's continued battle against climate change. Given Seychelles' vulnerability to climatic changes, strengthening regional and international partnerships to form binding agreements around emissions reduction targets and taking polluting nations to task will become a requirement.³²

Despite tremendous challenges, Seychelles has made considerable progress and will need to carefully balance decisions between environment, economy and equity concerns. For the newly installed government, this has come to mean protecting the health of the populace to generate wealth. To that end, the Seychelles is the first country in Africa to kick-start a nationwide vaccine program. With 13,163 vaccinations given since the campaign started, the island nation currently ranks third in the world in terms of vaccinations administered.³³ The country has also re-opened its borders for tourism to all countries with immediate effect, signalling the government's intent to focus on economic recovery as soon as possible.³⁴

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Pacific Ocean

Small Island States

Aotearoa New Zealand

Sub-National Island Jurisdictions

Guam

Hawai'i

Okinawa Island



Aotearoa New Zealand



Hawai'i



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COVID-19 Island Insights Series

No. 11, February 2021

Aotearoa New Zealand

Gerard Prinsen

The COVID-19 Island Insights Series is an initiative spearheaded by the Strathclyde Centre for Environmental Law & Governance (SCELG) and the Institute of Island Studies (IIS) at the University of Prince Edward Island in collaboration with Island Innovation. The initiative brings together critical assessments of how specific islands around the world have performed during the COVID-19 pandemic and the extent to which their recovery plans can promote resilience and sustainability in the long term.

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Aotearoa New Zealand
Population: 5,101,400 (Sep 2020)¹
Area: 268,838 km² ²

COVID-19 data and timeline
(As of 20 January, 2020³)

- 2,267 cases (since first case on 28 Feb 2020): 0.0004% of population. Last case of community transmission was on 18 Nov 2020.
- Fatalities: 25 (0.000005% of population)
- Schools closed nationwide on 25 March 2020 and reopened 29 April 2020
- Borders closed on 19 March 2020

Only citizens and permanent residents are permitted to cross the border and must enter a 14-day mandatory quarantine in a Managed Isolation and Quarantine (MIQ) facility.⁴

Gerard Prinsen

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Aotearoa New Zealand⁵

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COVID-19 on Aotearoa New Zealand

Aotearoa New Zealand is a bicultural island nation of about five million people in the South Pacific, based on the Treaty of Waitangi of 1840 between Indigenous Māori (comprising about 16% of today's population) and the British Crown, now the country's Westminster-style Parliament.

The first confirmed case of COVID-19 was an incoming traveller on 28 February 2020, but soon it became clear that the number of infections caused by community transmissions began to increase.⁶ Government consulted with public health scientists and, considering the country's limited capacity to conduct an effective track-and-trace programme and anticipating potential cases in the tens of thousands, it was decided to abandon a mitigation strategy, or 'flattening the curve'. Instead, government opted for an elimination strategy at the national level. On 21 March, a four-tiered elimination strategy was presented, from an Alert Level 1 (international travel restrictions, contact tracing protocols) escalating to an Alert Level 4 (full lockdown at home, all schools, offices and businesses closed except supermarkets and pharmacies). By 26 March, Alert Level 4 had been declared.⁷

Travel restrictions for people coming to Aotearoa New Zealand started on 2 February 2020, when travellers from a growing list of points of departure were banned. On 19 March all international travellers were banned from entering. Since then, only citizens and permanent residents have been allowed to return home and are required to enter in a government-controlled

Managed Isolation and Quarantine facility. In evolving forms, the nation-wide lockdown lasted seven weeks until 14 May.⁸

On 8 June government returned to Alert Level 1, "effectively declaring the pandemic over in New Zealand, 103 days after the first identified case".⁹ Since then, there have been occasional infections in the community, but contact tracing efforts have proven to be effective. According to a 'Government Stringency Index', this country had the world's strictest COVID-19 response in April 2020 (96.3 out of a 100) before ranking as the country with the world's least restricted daily life since June (22.2 out of a 100).¹⁰ This reflects the government's response to the pandemic: "Go hard, go early".¹¹

As matters stand, international travellers cannot enter. On this day in January 2020, there were 24,758 people crossing the border; today in 2021, only 292 people crossed the border – all returning citizens or permanent residents.¹² Even this inflow is strictly controlled. There are 5,800 beds in the 32 Quarantine facilities and people have to book a spot before they can book a ticket. On 4 January, the earliest vacancy was mid-March.¹³ This system ensures people who want to come home can return, but the waiting time in the queue can be up to eight weeks. By the end of January 2021, Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern stated that the upcoming vaccination campaign would not result in lifting the ban on incoming travel and she expected the border to remain closed "for much of the year".¹⁴

⁶ Source: Jefferies, S., et al. (2020). *COVID-19 in New Zealand and the impact of the national response: A descriptive epidemiological study*. *The Lancet Public Health*, 5(11), e612-e623.

⁷ Source: Baker, M. et al. (2020). *New Zealand's elimination strategy for the COVID-19 pandemic and what is required to make it work*. *The New Zealand Medical Journal*, 133(1512), 10-14.

⁸ Source: New Zealand Government. 2020. *History of the COVID-19 Alert System*.

⁹ Source: Baker, M. et al. 2020. *Successful elimination of Covid-19 transmission in New Zealand*. *New England Journal of Medicine*, 383(8) e56.

¹⁰ Source: Hale, T. et al. (2020). *Oxford COVID-19 Government Response Tracker*. Oxford Blavatnik School of Government.

¹¹ See: Jamieson, T. 2020. "Go hard, go early": Preliminary lessons from New Zealand's response to COVID-19. *The American Review of Public Administration*, 50(6-7): 598-605.

¹² Source: StatsNZ. Jan 2021. *COVID-19 data portal*. Travel/Daily border crossings - arrival.

¹³ Source: Hunt, E. 2021. *New Zealand tightens border again amid fears over new Covid variant*. *The Guardian*.

¹⁴ Source: Radio New Zealand. Jan 2021. *Jacinda Ardern speaks in first post-Cabinet briefing of 2021*.

Key socioeconomic pressures in the Aotearoa New Zealand during COVID-19

The pandemic see-sawed the economy: a record drop of 11.0% in GDP of second quarter of 2020 was followed by a record rebound of 14.0% in the third quarter. Even though this meant a year-on-year decline in GDP of 2.2%¹⁵, it was less than the 4.8% decline projected.¹⁶ The pandemic impact was cushioned by a government wage subsidy for affected employers from June to September 2020, paying employers (and the self-employed) USD 424 (NZD 585) per week per employee if they kept employment.¹⁷

Nonetheless, unemployment crept up from 4.2% to 5.3% by the end of 2020.¹⁸ In January, government spoke of a “recovery from COVID-19 on the New Zealand job market” noting vacancies were going up in four of the ten regions.¹⁹ Government borrowing for the “Covid-19 Response and Recovery Fund” amounted to USD 44.6 billion (NZD 62.1 billion). Before COVID-19, the government’s debt-to-GDP ratio was 19%; it is expected to triple by 2024 to 55% of GDP.²⁰ While the economy’s rebound is remarkable, different sectors were affected in different and sometimes surprising ways – as discussed next.

Prior to COVID-19, international tourism was the fastest growing sector, employing 14% of the workforce.²¹ Nearly four million tourists ac-

counted for 10% of national GDP, but with borders closed, nearly 50,000 jobs were lost.²² The impact is illustrated with a look at one well-known tourism business. Ngāi Tahu Tourism is a business collectively owned by 60,000 tribal members and normally hosts more than a million visitors a year to its twelve sites.²³ However, the business ceased operations in May 2020, shedding more than 90% of its workforce. “Our tourism businesses, alongside the rest of the industry, no longer have any revenue, and even when the industry does eventually re-establish, it is expected to take a long time to recover”.²⁴

The expected inflow of 120,000 international students to universities, language schools, and polytechnics also came to a halt. This sector supported 49,000 jobs²⁵ and contributes nearly 2% to GDP.²⁶ For 2020 and 2021, the country’s eight universities have seen “none of the first-year [international] intake” which will “cause difficult financial decisions”.²⁷ The other education providers, enrolling 65% of international students, will also be devastated: “without extra government funding schools would have to lay off staff”.²⁸

The impact on the agriculture sector is divergent. The USD 6.9 billion (NZD 9.5 billion) horticulture industry saw crops rotting because the more than 10,000 seasonal workers from the Pacific needed for harvesting were not able to arrive.²⁹ On the other hand, the dairy industry that contributes about 10% to GDP does not depend on international travellers and produced

¹⁵ Source: StatsNZ. Dec 2020. *Quarterly GDP bounces back, but COVID still a drag on annual growth*.

¹⁶ Source: Tandon, A. et al. Sep 2020. *Economic impact of COVID-19. Implications for health financing in Asia and Pacific*. Washington: World Bank Group. Page 4.

¹⁷ Source: Employment New Zealand. 2021. *Wage subsidy schemes*. Wellington: MBIE.

¹⁸ Source: Stats NZ. 2021. *Labour market*. Wellington: Stats NZ.

¹⁹ Source: Ministry of Business Innovation & Employment. Jan 2021. *Jobs Online monthly data release*. Wellington: MBIE.

²⁰ Source: Cotton, J. Oct 2020. *Debt to the future: The cost of recovery. The Spinoff*.

²¹ Source: Ministry of Business Innovation & Employment. Sep 2019. *Optimising Tourism New Zealand’s future role and contribution to New Zealand*. Wellington: MBIE. Page 4.

²² Source: Stats NZ. (2020). *Tourism satellite account: Year ended March 2020*. Wellington: Stats NZ.

²³ See: *Website of Ngāi Tahu Tourism*.

²⁴ Source: Ngāi Tahu Tourism. Apr 2020. *Ngāi Tahu Tourism update*.

²⁵ <https://www.beehive.govt.nz/release/international-education-contributes-51-billion-new-zealand-economy>

²⁶ <https://news.aut.ac.nz/news/international-students-an-opportunity> 2020

²⁷ Source: Radio New Zealand. Jan 2021. *Foreign students in country fewer than half normal number*.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Flaws, B. Sep 2020. *‘This just cannot happen’: \$9.5 billion at risk as horticulture sector struggles to fill \$25-an-hour jobs*. Wellington: Stuff.

as much milk solids in 2020 as in preceding years.³⁰

A sector that fared surprisingly well was retail. Inevitably, its sales during lockdown plummeted by 80%. However, once lockdown was over, retail sales surged and monthly sales growth since June far exceeded preceding years. Sales in December 2020 were 20.6% up compared to December 2019.³¹ It has been speculated that the inability to spend on travel has led consumers to spend more on electronics, cars, and garden items.³²

Post Covid-19 recovery on Aotearoa New Zealand

The overall mood in the country at the time of writing seems to be one of an anxious relief – asking, ‘Have we really dodged the pandemic’s worst impact?’ – rather than a keen desire to discuss visions of the future. Perhaps the following comment captures the mood of many people best: “Our freedom to go to the office is something to be appreciated”, as well as domestic holidays during this southern hemisphere’s summer: “A New Zealand summer pretty much set aside for New Zealanders ... and it felt good”.³³

Nonetheless, there is of course an awareness the crisis is not over and that COVID-19 may be a crisis that could, or should, be used to consider issues of resilience and sustainability with more urgency, as well as an eye for structural inequalities. In addition, the room for fundamental discussions has perhaps increased because

the Labour Party – having led the country through the COVID-19 crisis – was re-elected into government in October 2020 with an absolute majority and the largest proportion of the popular vote since 1951.³⁴ Yet debate about post-COVID-19 recovery still seem rather muted and views appear divided between people and sectors who seek to return to the pre-COVID life and those who argue COVID revealed the need to reset policies for a post-pandemic nation.

In recent months, several industry bodies have presented reports to government outlining how they envision post-COVID-19 recovery policies. The powerful construction and building industry, for example, presented government with a six-year recovery plan that basically seeks a return to pre-COVID-19 conditions.³⁵ The tourism industry presented a report to the new government with a largely similar view.³⁶ Overall, many of the plans submitted to government for post-COVID-19 recovery “were to-do lists from existing councils and private organisations”.³⁷

On the other side, there are clear voices for change. For example, people associated with the tourism industry advocate resuming in a more vigorous fashion approaches to more sustainable tourism that actually emerged just prior to COVID-19 – such as the Tiaki Promise³⁸ – and thus building a more resilient post-pandemic sector.³⁹ Similarly, advocates for social policy reform emphasise that reducing inequalities, with a reference to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), should guide post-COVID-19 recovery policies.⁴⁰

³⁰ Diaries Companies Association of New Zealand. Nov 2020. *New Zealand milk production monthly update*.

³¹ Retail NZ. Jan 2021. *Retail NZ sales index*.

³² Source: Radio New Zealand. Nov 2020. *Retail surges post-lockdown on demand for cars, electronics*.

³³ Source: Braunias, S. Jan 2021. *The daily grind never felt sweeter: New Zealanders should enjoy their Covid-free liberties*. *The Guardian*.

³⁴ Shaw, R. et al. Oct 2020. *Jacinda Ardern and Labour returned in a landslide — 5 experts on a historic New Zealand election*. *The Conversation*.

³⁵ See: Ministry of Business Innovation & Employment & Building Research Association of New Zealand (BRANZ). Dec 2020. *National Construction Pipeline Report*.

³⁶ See: Tourism New Zealand. Nov 2020. *Briefing for the Incoming Minister*.

³⁷ Thomas, M. May 2020. *Sustainable Development Goals should drive the Covid-19 rebuild*. *The Spinoff*.

³⁸ See: website of the *Tiaki Promise New Zealand*.

³⁹ See: Carr, A. (2020) *COVID-19, indigenous peoples and tourism: A view from New Zealand*. *Tourism Geographies*, 22(3): 491-502.

⁴⁰ See: Spoonley, P. et al. 2020. *He oranga hou: Social cohesion in a post COVID-19 world*. Auckland: University of Auckland.

Overall, having so far escaped the worst pandemic effects, there seems little inclination in Aotearoa New Zealand to 'go back to the drawing board' and discuss a future in terms of a response to the effects of the pandemic. Instead, a drive may be emerging to *resume* pre-pandemic discussions about sustainability and resilience with more vigour and a sense of urgency. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the government's statistics agency developed a national set of indicators to measure wellbeing that explicitly integrated the SDGs.⁴¹ However, while many non-governmental organisations advocate strongly to use the SDGs in response to the impact of COVID-19, the official response so far has been limited to an acknowledgement of these calls; for example in a Research Brief for parties by the New Zealand Parliament.⁴² The words of one of the country's major accounting firm in January 2021, probably capture the mood when it noted government and businesses needed to move "from Business-as-Usual to Change-as-Usual".⁴³

Useful Sources

- ***Beehive Government***. Portal for Government initiatives and policies
- ***Radio New Zealand***. Publicly funded non-commercial New Zealand radio and news network
- ***StatsNZ COVID-19 data portal***. New Zealand's official data agency
- ***Unite against COVID-19***. Portal for official COVID-19 data and messages

⁴¹ Source: StatsNZ. Jul 2019. *Indicators Aotearoa New Zealand – Ngā Tūtohu Aotearoa*.

⁴² New Zealand Parliament. Nov 2020. *Research Brief - Sustainable Development Goals*.

⁴³ Source: KPMG New Zealand. 2021. *From Business-as-Usual to Change-as-Usual*.



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COVID-19 Island Insights Series

No. 7, December 2020

Guam

Romina King

The COVID-19 Island Insights Series is an initiative spearheaded by the Strathclyde Centre for Environmental Law & Governance (SCELG) and the Institute of Island Studies (IIS) at the University of Prince Edward Island in collaboration with Island Innovation. The initiative brings together critical assessments of how specific islands around the world have performed during the COVID-19 pandemic and the extent to which their recovery plans can promote resilience and sustainability in the long term.

For more information on SCELG see
<https://www.strath.ac.uk/scelg>

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COVID-19 on Guam

As of 20 November 2020, Guam documented 6,452 total cases of COVID-19 and 103 fatalities.^{11,12} A total of 81,034 tests have been administered.¹³ The majority of positive test cases reside in Northern Guam.¹⁴ Contact tracing indicates that COVID-19 is predominantly transmitted via household (1,571); community (858); workplace (969); and some through healthcare (72).¹⁵ Guam Memorial Hospital, the island's main hospital, understaffed and in need of major renovations, exceeded capacity in late October and placed overflow patients outside.¹⁶

A state of emergency was declared on 14 March 2020 via Executive Order 2020-03.¹⁷ Guam confirmed its first three COVID-19 cases on 15 March 2020¹⁸ triggering the first lockdown. On 16 March 2020, public schools closed and by 06 April 2020, classes were cancelled for the remainder of the school year.¹⁹ Private schools continued via distance learning. Gatherings of ≥ 50 people were prohibited, and

a mandatory 14-day quarantine²⁰ was imposed on arrivals from affected COVID-19 areas.²¹ Completely shutting down the island, specifically closing the airport and banning all inbound flights, was not feasible because the Governor has no authority over U.S. Federal Aviation Administration facilities. As a territory²² of the United States, Guam cannot control immigration; the island must abide by U.S. law. Additional rules and regulations were passed on 26 November 2020, residents may be fined up to \$1,000 and businesses may be fined up to \$10,000 for failing to follow DPHSS Guidance Memoranda and Directives on COVID-19.²³

In April 2020, the Governor and her Guam Recovery Panel of Advisors implemented a four-step "Pandemic Condition of Readiness" (PCOR) system; and established the COVID-19 Area Risk (CAR) Score, which consists of three factors: case doubling time²⁴, test positivity rate²⁵, and new cases per 100K people.²⁶ An ideal CAR score is 5.0. As of 29 November

¹¹ These figures do not reflect the 1,156 infections and one death from the USS Theodore Roosevelt, which docked in Guam; these are counted separately (<https://www.pncguam.com/covid-19-outbreak-hits-uss-theodore-roosevelt-again/>). The handling of the USS Theodore Roosevelt COVID-19 outbreak was an international incident and led to the firing of Captain Brett Crozier for a leaked letter vehemently requesting US intervention, and the subsequent resignation of Acting Navy Secretary Thomas Modly (<https://www.navytimes.com/news/your-navy/2020/05/19/carrier-theodore-roosevelt-sidelined-in-guam-by-coronavirus-heads-back-to-sea-this-week/>). Approximately 3,000 of the aircraft carrier USS Theodore Roosevelt's sailors were housed in empty Guam hotels for a 14-day quarantine, with the permission by the Governor of Guam, despite some residents' fear of further transmission into the local community (https://www.postguam.com/news/local/navy-3-000-sailors-will-be-housed-in-guam-hotels/article_f18a44fc-759f-11ea-bc17-9b28e21c7b29.html).

¹² <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1n-vrUG-zEzs7rjcxXBFEBIMmeUQykuyO9/view>

¹³ <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1n-vrUG-zEzs7rjcxXBFEBIMmeUQykuyO9/view>

¹⁴ <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1n-vrUG-zEzs7rjcxXBFEBIMmeUQykuyO9/view>

¹⁵ <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1n-vrUG-zEzs7rjcxXBFEBIMmeUQykuyO9/view>

¹⁶ <https://www.pacificislandtimes.com/single-post/2020/10/27/GMH-exceeds-capacity-patients-overflow-beds-set-up-at-curb-side>

¹⁷ <http://dphss.guam.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/COVID19-EO.pdf>

¹⁸ <https://www.guampdn.com/story/news/local/2020/03/15/governor-3-guam-confirmed-positive-covid-19/5053098002/>

¹⁹ <https://www.guampdn.com/story/news/2020/04/05/guam-department-education-superintendent-jon-fernandez-cancels-rest-school-year/2952618001/>

²⁰ The 14-day mandatory quarantine became Guam's primary tool to deter visitors and prevent additional cases from being imported into the island.

²¹ <https://www.guampdn.com/story/news/local/2020/03/15/governor-3-guam-confirmed-positive-covid-19/5053098002/>

²² Guam remains one of 17 colonies left in the world. A federal appeals court in July ruled that Guam's proposed political status plebiscite, which would have allowed native inhabitants to vote whether they preferred to remain as a U.S. territory, statehood, independence, or free association, illegally discriminates based on race, in violation of the Constitution, and thus, cannot be held.

²³ https://www.postguam.com/news/local/new-fines-for-breaking-social-gathering-and-other-public-health-directives-go-into-effect-on/article_e9bcac1c-2ec5-11eb-8887-e73806f20d4c.html

²⁴ Doubling time refers to how many days it takes for the number of infections to double.

²⁵ Positivity rate refers to the percentage of people who have tested positive for COVID-19 out of the total number of tests administered.

²⁶ <https://www.pncguam.com/covid-19-area-risk-scoring-system-developed-for-quarantine-and-testing-requirements/>

2020, Guam's CAR score was 6.7, an improvement from an early November CAR score of 33.4.^{27,28}

Guam transitioned from PCOR 1 (most severe restrictions) to PCOR 2 on 10 May 2020, allowing some businesses to operate with safety precautions in place, and then to PCOR 3 on July 20, marking the end of the first wave. In mid-August, a spike in cases returned the island back PCOR 1.²⁹ In response, Guam re-organized their pandemic strategy and launched "Strive for Five" to achieve a CAR Score of 5.0.³⁰ The five-prong approach included:

1. deployment of the Rapid Engagement Team to the most vulnerable subdivisions;
2. direct engagement with Federated States of Micronesia community leaders for outreach/education to the Chuukese community³¹;
3. a daily average of >600 tests;
4. tighter socialization restrictions; and
5. increased public awareness of death toll and hospital overflows.³²

To assist affected individuals, families, small businesses, and local governments, three aid packages were authorized by the U.S. Congress in 2019:

1. Coronavirus Preparedness and Response Supplemental Appropriations Act (H.R. 6074)³³;
2. Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA) (H.R. 6201)³⁴; and

²⁷ <https://ghs.guam.gov/jic-release-no-472-results-14-260-test-positive-covid-19-dphss-begin-daily-covid-19-community-mass>

²⁸ <https://www.pacificislandtimes.com/single-post/2020/11/11/Guam-reports-101-new-cases-CAR-score-jumps-to-334>

²⁹ This second PCOR1 was supposed to initially last for two weeks but has ultimately lasted until the present day (02 Dec 2020).

³⁰ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-Gr9fXnGOKs>

³¹ In the recent spike of positive cases of COVID-19, Chuukese residents on Guam had higher rates of infection and mortality, which triggered a targeted approach to this specific community on Guam. Chuuk is one of the states in the Federated States of Micronesia,

³² <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-Gr9fXnGOKs>

3. Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act, or "CARES Act," (H.R. 748)^{35, 36}

The FFCRA provided additional Medicaid funding and lowered the local Medicaid match for territories. The CARES Act included \$3 billion for the U.S. territories and the District of Columbia, to be distributed proportionate to population. Of the \$3 billion, as much as \$153 million, was earmarked for education; and \$300 million was budgeted for nutrition assistance programs.

The CARES Act authorized direct one-time payments of \$1,200 (\$2,400 for couples) to all individuals (who filed 2017 taxes in the U.S. and its territories) earning less than \$75,000 (\$150,000 for couples). Families are eligible for an additional \$500/child. Wait times varied for these payments, due to GovGuam processing delays.

The Guam Department of Labor had to create a new Guam Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) Program to access the benefits of the CARES Act.³⁷ The CARES Act added an additional 13 weeks of unemployment benefits and up to 39 weeks for uninsured unemployment. Eligible individuals could claim an additional \$600 per week in Federal Pandemic Unemployment Compensation³⁸. As of 22 August 2020, 30,000 workers on Guam have received their PUA benefits.³⁹ Investigations of 20,000 potentially fraudulent unemployment claims

³³ H.R. 6074 includes 8.3 billion USD in emergency funding for federal agencies to respond to the COVID-19 outbreak

³⁴ H.R. 6201 includes free COVID-19 testing, expanded food assistance, increased Medicaid allotments for territories, and additional protections for health care workers

³⁵ H.R. 748 includes two trillion USD in aid to schools, hospitals, laid-off workers, small businesses, and territory governments

³⁶ <https://sannicolos.house.gov/financial-relief-package-us-territories>

³⁷ <https://dol.guam.gov/pandemic-unemployment-assistance-pua-federal-pandemic-unemployment-compensation-fpuc/>

³⁸ The program expired in 30 July 2020.

³⁹ <https://dol.guam.gov/pandemic-unemployment-assistance-pua-federal-pandemic-unemployment-compensation-fpuc/>

(out of the 65,000 initial claims filed) are delaying payouts for legitimate claims.⁴⁰

These aid packages provided \$100 billion for hospitals and medical facilities to cover unreimbursed healthcare related expenses or lost revenues attributed to COVID-19, as well as \$950 million to support public health activities addressing COVID-19 via the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). This aid is meant to increase the domestic supply of essential Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) by allocating \$16 billion for the Strategic National Stockpile, \$4.3 billion for the CDC, and \$1 billion for health agencies. Despite this aid, Guam experienced a PPE shortage, leading to community organizations manufacturing and donating homemade PPE, particularly face masks.⁴¹

On Guam, the Paycheck Protection Program⁴² provided \$192 million to more than 2,200 small businesses.⁴³ For expenses not covered under the PPP, the SBA offered the Economic Injury Disaster Loan Program (EIDL), a long-term financing option. As of 23 November 2020, the EIDL Program granted 1,322 Guam small businesses \$78.445 million worth of loans.⁴⁴ Some businesses on Guam are currently under investigation for allegedly defrauding or attempting to defraud these federal programs meant to assist small businesses survival.⁴⁵

Receiving COVID-19 federal aid was delayed due to the lack of infrastructure (i.e., the Government of Guam had to create, staff, and run a new, compliant local program); the mandatory remote-work situation for non-essential, government employees; and the fraudulent or incorrectly filed claims which have bogged down the fledgling systems.

Key socioeconomic pressures in Guam during COVID-19

As of 11 November 2020, Guam has experienced a higher percentage of cases and deaths per capita than many other Pacific Islands, with the possible exception of French Polynesia.⁴⁶ Compared to other U.S. States and territories, from 20 January 2020 – the present, Guam's positive infections rate is approximately 4,083 per 100,000 people.⁴⁷ With over 263,956 total deaths⁴⁸ in the U.S., the American government's national response to the COVID-19 pandemic may be perceived as abysmal.⁴⁹ Yong (2020) attributes this failure to the following: a slow, politicized, government response (despite ample warning time) that ignored scientific expertise; an underfunded federal department of public health; an inefficient, ill-prepared national health care system that marginalizes people of color; a lack of a social safety net, forcing lowly-paid essential employees to choose livelihood at the expense of health; and the conflagration of misinformation on social media platforms.⁵⁰

⁴⁰ https://www.postguam.com/news/local/labor-fraudulent-jobless-benefit-claims-top-20k/article_b92956e2-f638-11ea-aaf5-db436def751f.html

⁴¹ <https://ppeforguam.com/>

⁴² The Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) through the Small Business Administration (SBA) includes 350 billion USD for zero-fee loans to employers who continued to pay employees during the pandemic. To address immediate cash flow concerns, the CARES Act included 10 billion USD for advances of up to 10,000 USD to small businesses and nonprofits that apply for an SBA Economic Injury Disaster Loan (EIDL).

⁴³ https://www.postguam.com/news/local/businesses-investigated-for-alleged-pandemic-aid-fraud/article_8f67c2be-2ec1-11eb-953d-97077a681f10.html

⁴⁴ https://www.postguam.com/news/local/businesses-investigated-for-alleged-pandemic-aid-fraud/article_8f67c2be-2ec1-11eb-953d-97077a681f10.html

⁴⁵ https://www.postguam.com/news/local/businesses-investigated-for-alleged-pandemic-aid-fraud/article_8f67c2be-2ec1-11eb-953d-97077a681f10.html

⁴⁶ <https://www.who.int/westernpacific/internal-publications-detail/covid-19-joint-external-situation-report-for-pacific-islands-30>

⁴⁷ https://covid.cdc.gov/covid-data-tracker/#cases_cas-esper100klast7days

⁴⁸ https://covid.cdc.gov/covid-data-tracker/#cases_cas-esper100k

⁴⁹ <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2020/09/21/americans-give-the-u-s-low-marks-for-its-handling-of-covid-19-and-so-do-people-in-other-countries/>

⁵⁰ <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2020/09/coronavirus-american-failure/614191/>

Despite poor federal direction, Guam's Governor, a former nurse, convened a panel of health experts that advocated social distancing, masks, a 'safer-at-home' policy, and an early lockdown (with the exception of flights).

The mainstay of Guam's local economy, tourism, ground to a halt. Several businesses closed.⁵¹ A recent survey of Guam residents (n=570), indicates 54% of respondents reported a decline in income since the beginning of the pandemic (March) and 51% are experiencing an increase in household expenditures.⁵² Additionally, 75% of respondents are experiencing financial stress; 61% are living from paycheck to paycheck. Approximately 20% reported that they possess savings to last one month or less.⁵³

Post Covid-19 recovery on Guam: A different approach?

It is anticipated that Guam's economy will worsen in 2021 and recovery will not occur until 2022, at the earliest.⁵⁴ Economic recovery will depend on the availability of U.S. federal relief funding and the widespread distribution of effective COVID-19 vaccines by the end of 2020 or mid-2021, for Guam and Guam's main tourist markets in Japan and Korea.⁵⁵ Some hotels have adapted and temporarily transformed into quarantine facilities focusing on military and local guests.

Decreasing the dependence on tourism, federal aid, and military spending; and, diversifying the economy are crucial. Because of Guam's geographically unique position in the Asia-Pacific

region, there are other economic opportunities to consider, such as becoming a regional commercial trade or telecommunications hub.

Post Covid-19 recovery and the Sustainable Development Goals

The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the fragility of Guam's economic dependence on US aid and tourism. It is an impetus to move faster toward sustainability and the green economy. In September 2019, Executive Order 2019-23⁵⁶ established a Guam Green Growth (G3) Initiative Working Group, led by the University of Guam Center for Island Sustainability. G3 consists of government, academia, private sector, non-profit, and youth partners working together to transition Guam toward the green economy and a more equitable society by planning innovative, place-based, and practical solutions toward sustainability. Guam joined the Local 2030 Islands Network⁵⁷ as a founding member during the 74th United Nations General Assembly and Climate Week NYC 2019, signalling to the world, that Guam is ready to advance the 17 United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The G3 Working Group forged the G3 Action Framework which encompasses the SDGs and focuses on five categories: 1) Healthy and Prosperous Communities; 2) Educated, Capable, and Compassionate Island; 3) Sustainable Homes, Utilities, and Transportation; 4) Thriving Natural Resources; and 5) Sustainable Alliances.⁵⁸ It was formally adopted by GovGuam

⁵¹ <https://www.pacificislandtimes.com/single-post/2020/08/15/Chamber-Most-businesses-wont-survive-two-week-shutdown>

⁵² <https://www.pncguam.com/survey-details-economic-impact-of-covid-19-pandemic/>

⁵³ <https://www.pncguam.com/survey-details-economic-impact-of-covid-19-pandemic/>

⁵⁴ https://www.postguam.com/news/local/banker-guam-economy-shattered/article_31a49d68-012c-11eb-ba0b-ff92f795c48b.html

⁵⁵ https://www.postguam.com/news/local/banker-guam-economy-shattered/article_31a49d68-012c-11eb-ba0b-ff92f795c48b.html

⁵⁶ https://nam04.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.uog.edu%2F_resources%2Ffiles%2Fnews-and-announcements%2F2019-2020%2FEO2019-23.pdf&data=02%7C01%7Csantosc8258%40triton.uog.edu%7Ce1c86fbbf749dd67f208d85de54b49%7C2a652fdf10c34e4f9e94369090abfd04%7C0%7C0%7C637362586697090124&sdata=MNVkF5G9NhhHZdxa6xII5D8xJnNi%2FWIHBpSITfijMKA%3D&reserved=0

⁵⁷ The network is co-chaired by the Hawai'i Green Growth Local 2030 Hub and the Global Island Partnership.

⁵⁸ <https://www.pncguam.com/guam-green-growth-working-group-to-launch-thursday/>

in September 2020.⁵⁹ With COVID-19 affecting Guam's economy, critical global supply chains, and the survival of the most vulnerable, G3 aims to help Guam build back stronger, more equitable, more resilient and hopefully less dependent on military spending, tourism, and imported food.

Useful Sources

- <http://dphss.guam.gov/covid-19/>
- <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/index.html>

⁵⁹ <https://www.pacificislandtimes.com/single-post/2020/09/24/Guam-adopts-10-year-action-plan-for-sustainable-future>



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ISLAND



COVID-19 Island Insights Series

No. 12, February 2021

Hawai'i

Marina Karides

The COVID-19 Island Insights Series is an initiative spearheaded by the Strathclyde Centre for Environmental Law & Governance (SCELG) and the Institute of Island Studies (IIS) at the University of Prince Edward Island in collaboration with Island Innovation. The initiative brings together critical assessments of how specific islands around the world have performed during the COVID-19 pandemic and the extent to which their recovery plans can promote resilience and sustainability in the long term.

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Hawai'i is an archipelago in the Pacific. Hawai'i, Maui, Kaho'olawe, Molo'ka'i, Lanai, Oahu, Kauai, and Ni'ihau, are its main islands. Though it is officially recognized as a state within the US, Native Hawaiians and allies challenge its legitimacy due to the illegal overthrow of the Hawaiian Kingdom in 1893.

The population size is 1, 416 million.¹

The combined area of the archipelago is 16, 758 km².²

COVID-19 data and timeline

- First case detected on 6 March 2020.
- Number of confirmed cases until 15 February, 2021, 26, 889 (1.2% of population)
- Number of fatalities through 15 February 2021, 426.
- Schools transferred to on-line learning on 24 March 2020.
- Main travel restrictions were enacted on 26 March 2020.
- Travel restrictions remain in place including pre-travel COVID-19 tests and/or quarantine requirements.

¹ <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/HI>

² <http://www.city-data.com/states/Hawaii-Location-size-and-extent.html>

Marina Karides

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Hawai'i³

³ Source <https://www.freeworldmaps.net/United-states/hawaii/map.html>

COVID-19 on Hawai'i

The global reckoning that COVID-19 was indeed a pandemic came in mid-March 2020. Because the United States (US) failed to offer a national approach or a cohesive set of federal policies, US states were left to independently manage their responses to COVID-19. In comparison to other US states, there is little doubt that the state of Hawai'i has maintained the most aggressive policies to limit the spread of COVID-19. Since March 2020, it has continued to maintain the strictest restrictions in relation to travel, social gatherings, and use of public facilities. The vast majority of cases in Hawai'i have occurred on the densely populated island of Oahu, which is also the most touristed.

As the international center of the Pacific, where "east" meets "west", Hawai'i's approach reflects an appreciation of its transnationality and its uniquely remote island location. Inadequate contact tracing and limited testing led to the highest surge of cases experienced by the state in August 2020. With daily infections for the first time in the triple digits, the state's health director and public safety director resigned.

At present, Hawai'i's holds the lowest positivity rate among US states. Hawai'i's average positivity rate is 1.2 percent, in comparison to the US average at 4.6 percent (Penner 2021)⁴. Hawai'i's strict travel restrictions distinguishes its approach from the continental US. On 21 March 21 2020 the governor signed into order a mandatory 14-day self-quarantine that stayed in place through October 15, 2020. Initially the quarantine order included inter-island travel to and from all islands. With the goal of flattening the curve, the ultimate purpose of the order was to deter tourism to Hawai'i by strictly limiting the movement of new arrivals. Visitors or returning residents were only permitted to leave their

dwelling for medical emergencies and not for any other purpose such as purchasing food.

During the months of the 14-day self-quarantine, the *Honolulu Star Advertiser*, the island chain's largest newspaper, along with smaller local news outlets, reported numerous accounts of tourists breaking quarantine, questioning how quarantines could be regulated, and who was accountable to report failures of compliance.⁵ On 27 March 2020 the government enacted a state-wide stay-at-home and work-at-home order which continued through April 30, 2020 with fines of \$5000 for non-compliance. These measures were publicly supported by the tourist industry such as Hawaiian Airlines and caused the suspension of cruise ship traffic to Hawai'i. COVID-19 movement restrictions were implemented the day after a protest convoy occurred on several of Hawai'i islands with residents honking horns and attaching signs to their vehicles seeking policies that would protect Hawai'i residents, especially *kupuna* (elders).

While the state government enacted policies related to out-of-state travel and stay-at-home orders, the implementation of COVID-19 policies were conducted at the county level. In Hawai'i, counties serve as the local level of governance as there is no city or municipal governance. Hawai'i is divided into four main counties (a fifth, Kalawao county governs the area in Moloka'i designated for those with Hansen's Disease) which include Honolulu, Hawai'i, Kauai, and Maui. Each of these counties maintains their own policies regarding the determination of what constitutes essential businesses, protocols at dining venues, and access to public beaches and parks. In addition, counties are able to request modifications of state level policies. For example, in October, Hawai'i transitioned from its 14-day self-quarantine order to negative test exemption (Emergency Rule #23) which permits travellers who have received a

⁴ Penner, Rienhold. 2021. [COVID] Daily Numbers Update 02/15/21, Email communication to UHARI listserv.

⁵ <https://www.staradvertiser.com/2020/05/19/hawaii-news/hawaii-residents-keep-eye-out-for-visitors-who-break-quarantine/>

negative COVID-19 test within 72 hours of arrival to enter the state without quarantining. However, Kauai County's mayor was able to impose a temporary moratorium on its participation in the state's pre-travel testing program in response to the doubling of COVID-19 cases on the island. An earlier case of island-specific policies was in Hawai'i County. In bold contrast to the governor's March 17th CDC-informed strategies to maintain only essential employees and shutter bars and restaurants, the mayor of Hawai'i island announced that same day, "the County of Hawai'i will maintain its services and operations as normal. All County employees are to report to work as scheduled",⁶ but left private businesses to decide on their own whether or not to close or modify operations. Despite letters from the public and a sorrowful emergency council meeting with councilpersons making teary-eyed pleas, the Mayor resisted stating that he received "permission from the attorney general, it's that flexible."⁷ Unfortunately, a dramatic rise in COVID-19 cases and loss of life in elder care facilities (a sector particularly hard hit across the US) demonstrated the failure of his approach, after which he shortly revised.

Like other US states, due to a history of discrimination, specific sectors of the population suffered precipitously more with sickness and death from COVID-19. A study by medical researchers at UH Mānoa found that Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders (NHPI) have been overwhelmingly distressed by COVID-19. He linked this to their overrepresentation as essential workers, limited access to health services and insurance, and holding a higher-than-average rate of pre-existing conditions. Though in Hawai'i Pacific Islanders make up about four percent of the state's population, they represent

more than 24 percent of the state's COVID-19 cases.⁸

The state provided updates through media and also open forums for public questions. However, the regular changes in policies addressing the spread of COVID-19 and the different policies enacted by each county has created much confusion for both local residents and travellers to Hawai'i. Finally, the Hawai'i Board of Education had no clear state approach to their call for a return-to-learn reopening plan. Many private schools have opened their doors, while public schools, many in low-income communities, have yet to re-open. The approach seems to be independently decided by schools with procedures that appear unsystematic. In addition, much of Hawai'i islands are rural and internet access is limited and uneven throughout the state which also suffers from a digital divide due to income inequality and under-resourced public schools.

Key socioeconomic pressures in Hawai'i during COVID-19

Tourism

Both in response to and by taking advantage of its island geography, Hawai'i was able to immediately enact strict restrictions impeding travel with its extended quarantine as well as disincentives to potential tourists by closure of tourist attractions bringing tourism to a halt. The success of Hawai'i to strikingly limit COVID-19 cases as compared to the continental US arrived with an economic cost and the recognition that the state's dependency on tourism was crippling. Along with travel restrictions, cutting into tourism and recreation by state residents

⁶ <https://www.bigislandvideonews.com/2020/03/17/video-mayor-kim-sends-message-on-county-policy-after-state-covid-19-directives/>

⁷ <https://www.hawaiinewsnow.com/2020/03/21/emotional-council-members-plead-with-hawaii-county-mayor-take-action-over-covid-19/>

⁸ <https://jabsom.hawaii.edu/native-hawaiians-pacific-islanders-face-higher-rates-of-covid-19/>

was the closure of public parks and beaches. Beach parks were officially closed in March, though entry into the ocean was permitted. Beaches and other parks reopened mostly in May, though inconsistently by county and then closed again in August due to an uptick in COVID-19 cases. Most beaches were reopened by October 2020 and have remained open since. Beginning in March, across all islands, sporting events, festivals, and public gatherings were cancelled fairly quickly, for example the Merrie Monarch Festival, the single most important hula event which takes place in Hilo, Hawai'i. These cancellations significantly impacted the hospitality industry.

The tension between safety from COVID-19 and the negative economic impact of the 14-day self-quarantine and other restrictions have been palpable. This was particularly challenging in Oahu, the most populated island with well-known tourist sites such as Waikiki Beach and the North Shore, where international surfing competitions that have taken place for more than a half a century were cancelled.

Similar to many locations, drinking and dining venues are extremely challenged by COVID-19 related restrictions. Although island residents have continued to support restaurants despite limiting conditions, studies by UH Mānoa political science faculty who surveyed restaurant owners found that tourists make a substantial portion of their customer base. With a sample size of 184, the study shows that for many restaurants up to fifty percent of their customers are tourists.⁹ Along with the steep decline of tourism, restaurants in Hawai'i were particularly challenged by on-again, off-again-restrictions. Changes since March include permission to serve outdoors and/or indoors, the number of patrons permitted to enter the venue, and time constraints on the hours of operation and the serving of alcohol. The study conducted by Mānoa faculty found that restaurateurs felt a

⁹ Barthel, Paul, Samantha Miller and Lawrence H. Nintz. 2020. "Back To the Table Report" Volume 3. University of Hawai'i Public Policy Center.

lack of communication, transparency, and clear planning by government was an immense hurdle in surviving past COVID-19.¹⁰ The vast majority have little confidence in the state's decision-making processes in relation to COVID-19 matters. The report suggests that without rent assistance and forms of financial support, half of the restaurant owners in Hawai'i believe they will have to shutter their doors by April 2021.

Employment

In addition, the decline in the tourism sector created widespread unemployment in Hawai'i. The state's average unemployment rate in November 2020 was 10.1 percent, approximately eight percentage points higher than the same month the previous year. In addition, unemployment varied by island and this was tied directly to the island's or county's dependency on the tourist sector. For example, in Maui County unemployment reached 16 percent in November, while on the island of Hawai'i it held at 9.8 percent. Unemployment claims for January 16, 2021 increased by approximately 265 percent from that of the previous year.

Housing

A perennial challenge in Hawai'i has been affordable housing. Hawai'i is considered to be the most expensive state to live in the US with housing a substantial contributor to the high living costs. A study conducted by the Economic Research Organization at the University of Hawai'i (UHERO) found that rental property owners and managers surveyed in August 2020 had about a ten percent increase in late (after mid-month) payments of rent.¹¹ A state-wide moratorium on evictions implemented on 17 April 2020 was extended to 21 February 2021, though there are criticisms of its effectiveness. The US Federal Housing Administration had placed evictions on hold but only through the

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ <https://uhero.hawaii.edu/the-august-rental-market-struggling-tenants-and-rising-vacancies/>

end of December 2020. Under an executive order signed by the new Biden administration, the eviction moratorium will be extended to March 2021. The enactment of a federally mandated approach to COVID-19 by the new administration including funding to address the economic impact should benefit Hawai'i.

Post Covid-19 recovery on Hawai'i

According to the Hawai'i Tourist Authority (HTA) the majority of island residents think that "tourism in Hawai'i is being run for tourists at the expense of local residents".¹² For many of those in Hawai'i who have been critical of the unsustainable expansion of the tourist economy, COVID-19 impacts became an opportunity to re-examine Hawai'i's economy with calls to revise its tourist-centered approach. Though agriculture has been identified as a sector that could be expanded to diversify its economy, an UHERO study did not find it an effective for strategy for increasing a portion of the state's GDP.¹³ However for many residents in Hawai'i expansion of local and small-scale agriculture would contribute to healthy local foods and also reduce the archipelago's dependency on food imports, which currently exceed 90 percent of its food supply.

One organization, Āina Aloha Economic Futures,¹⁴ is a grassroots initiative formed on the basis of Native Hawaiian values, involving community-centered decision-making, to structure redevelopment in Hawai'i. The initiative, under Native Hawaiian leadership, was particularly concerned with re-opening tourism without a

strategy of stages and responses towards an increase of cases. In October 2020 when the state was preparing to open its doors to visitors, Aloha Futures, including community members and research faculty at UH Mānoa, outlined a two part plan for reopening tourism arguing that guests and visitors will "only be well-hosted by the people of Hawaii when our families and communities are safe, strong, and can exercise our ability to be stewards of our islands."¹⁵ While various agencies and organizations have offered proposals such as "Building Bridges: Not On Our Backs" by the Hawai'i State Commission on the Status of Women,¹⁶ the state government has not committed to a set of policies for redevelopment. Inspired by the UN sustainable development goals, in 2016 Hawai'i became the first state committed to reaching clean energy by 2045.¹⁷ Post-COVID-19 development plans are expected in April 2021. Though many state officials are concerned that action and implementation will be delayed until 2022, hopefully Hawai'i's SDGs guide its rebuilding strategies.^{18 19}

As of January 20, 2021 COVID-19 vaccines are being scheduled in Hawai'i on the island of Oahu. Neighbouring islands have also begun to receive supplies of the vaccine. Hawai'i is outpacing the US in COVID-19 vaccinations in long-term care facilities.²⁰

¹² <https://uhero.hawaii.edu/hawaii-tourism-authority-and-sustainable-destination-management-in-hawaii/>

¹³ <https://uhero.hawaii.edu/reviving-agriculture-to-diversify-hawaiis-economy/>

¹⁴ www.alohafutures.com

¹⁵ <https://www.ainaalohafutures.com/>

¹⁶ <https://humanservices.hawaii.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/4.13.20-Final-Cover-D2-Feminist-Economic-Recovery-D1.pdf>

¹⁷ <https://news.un.org/en/story/2020/03/1059832#:~:text=Sustainable%20Hawaii%20is%20an%20initiative,energy%20for%20electricity%20by%202045.>

¹⁸ <https://www.civilbeat.org/2021/02/stabilizing-or-stalling-state-officials-explain-why-hawaiis-recovery-plan-will-take-2-years/>

¹⁹ <https://alohachallenge.hawaii.gov/>

²⁰ <https://www.khon2.com/coronavirus/hawaii-outpaces-rest-of-nation-in-covid-19-vaccinations-for-long-term-care-facilities-survey-says/>



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ISLAND



COVID-19 Island Insights Series

No. 8, December 2020

Okinawa Islands

Hiroshi Kakazu

The COVID-19 Island Insights Series is an initiative spearheaded by the Strathclyde Centre for Environmental Law & Governance (SCELG) and the Institute of Island Studies (IIS) at the University of Prince Edward Island in collaboration with Island Innovation. The initiative brings together critical assessments of how specific islands around the world have performed during the COVID-19 pandemic and the extent to which their recovery plans can promote resilience and sustainability in the long term.

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The Okinawa Islands, a chain of Japan's Ryukyu Archipelago, are located between Kyushu and Taiwan. The island group consists of forty inhabited islands, with the largest being Okinawa, followed by the Yaeyama and Miyako island groups. After 450 years of independent Ryukyu Kingdom, Okinawa became one of the Japanese 47 prefectures in 1879

Size: 2,281 km² (53% is Okinawa)

Population: 1.45 million (90% live in Okinawa)¹

COVID-19 data and timeline (at 3rd November 2020)

First case detected on 4 February 2020

Number of confirmed cases until 3 November 2020: 3,392 (or 0.229% per capita vs 0.081% in Japan and 0.227% in Tokyo).

Number of fatalities: 63 (1,795 in Japan and 459 in Tokyo).

Schools closed during March 3-5 and August 16-30 on a selected basis.

The government requested voluntary restraint from travel based on the emergency declaration on 17 April and lifted on 25th May

The Go-To-Travel Campaign started on 22nd July

Hiroshi Kakazu

Dr. Hiroshi Kakazu is a Professor Emeritus of the University of the Ryukyus and President Emeritus of the Japan Society of Island Studies. He wrote several books on island economies and sustainability. He is the Chairperson of the Remote Island Development Panel of Okinawa Prefecture, responsible for drafting a sustainable development plan for the coming decade.



OKINAWA ISLANDS²

¹ Data obtained from the Okinawa Prefecture website, <https://www.pref.okinawa.jp/toukeika/>.

² Map downloaded from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ryukyu_Islands.

COVID-19 on the Okinawa Islands

The epicenter of the coronavirus in Japan was on the cruise ship *Diamond Princess* which visited

Okinawa Island on the way to Hong Kong. The first wave of COVID-19 cases in Okinawa started from 4 February to 2 May; after that, the new cases stayed at zero until 11 July, when the second wave started (see chart below). The first wave of COVID-19 cases from 4 February to 2 May was caused mainly by “corona refugees” and returnees from mainland Japan and abroad, particularly from Tokyo and Osaka, where about 50% of Japan’s infected cases were reported.

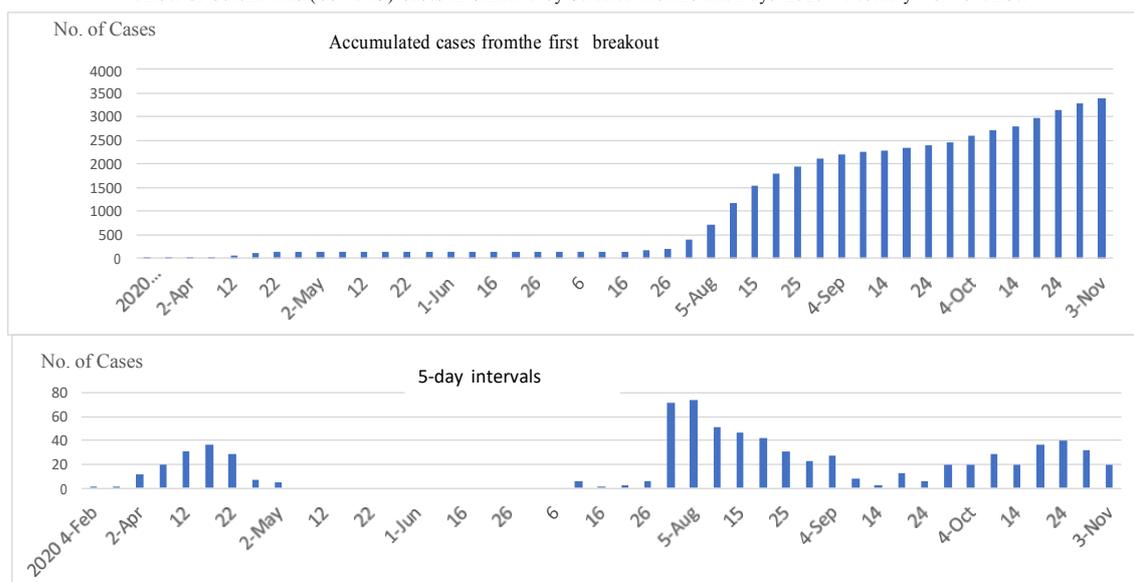
The Japanese government declared a state of emergency to all Japanese prefectures on 17 April, including Okinawa. The virus roared back after the lift of the emergency declaration on 25 May, followed by the Go-To-Travel Campaign started on 22 July to help boost, in particular, local tourism and hospitality operators. The coronavirus jumped to 3,392 cases, an increase of 21 times from 22 July to 3 November,

making Okinawa the worst case among all Japanese prefectures.

The second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic was accelerated by a specific factor in Okinawa, namely the presence of the huge U.S. military bases on Okinawa Island. Since the U.S. military authority in Okinawa reported the first positive coronavirus case on 2 July, the virus surged to 429 cases on 3 November 2020. U.S. bases highlight the “loophole” in Okinawa’s quarantine measures because of the U.S.-Japan security arrangements³.

Although the infection is concentrated in the Naha City of Okinawa Island, the virus has spread to Okinawa’s remote island areas—Miyako Island, Ishigaki Island, Iriomote Island, and Yonaguni Island, about 300-400 km south of Okinawa Island. Although the infected are mostly young and middle-aged persons under fifty with mostly unknown routes of transmission, the cluster infection cases in elder homes and medical facilities have been rising. Sixty-three persons had died in Okinawa from the infection as of November 3. The Okinawa Prefec-

Number of Coronavirus (Covid-19) Cases in Okinawa by Selected Months and Days: 2020 4 February ~ 3 November



Okinawa Prefectural Government website (Accessed on 4 November, 2020
https://www.pref.okinawa.jp/site/hoken/chiiki/hoken/kekaku/covid19_hasseijoukyou.html)

³ *Okinawa Times*, “COVID-19 Special Report.” 20 August 2020.

tural Board of Education announced school closures during March 3-15 in the first wave and August 16-30 in the second wave of coronavirus. School closures and their durations have been implemented on a selective basis according to the regional stage of infectious conditions. Some schools cut short their summer breaks.

COVID-19 Containment Measures

The Japanese government announced its coronavirus preventive measures without implementing lockdowns. The preventive measures are implemented on a voluntary basis, instead of mandated lockdown. Examples of outings that are not covered by preventive measures would include activities essential for maintaining daily life such as visiting hospitals, purchasing food, medicine, and daily necessities, going to work as necessary, exercising outdoors, or taking a walk. On Okinawa Island, medical facilities and staff are overwhelmed by the increasing number of infected patients. The Japanese government dispatched emergency medical staff in October at the request of the Okinawa governor. The local governments rented hotel rooms to accommodate mild patients or those required to stay-at-home without the need for medical care.

Key socioeconomic pressures in the Okinawa Islands during COVID-19

Okinawa is facing a looming economic crisis because of its heavy dependence on the travel and tourism industry as a key driver of economic activities. In terms of GDP, overall economic growth is expected to decline by about 10% this year, which is the worst growth rate since the Pacific War⁴. I live in Okinawa's most

tourist-concentrated area. My anecdotal observations are that the tourists have returned at about 20% of their pre-COVID levels after the implementation of the Go-To-Travel Campaign in July, which offers subsidies to cover half of the eligible travel expenses.

There is a huge chunk of the informal sector in Okinawa Islands, particularly in the tourism-related service sector, where part time and single-mother workers are concentrated⁵. According to *The Okinawa Times* report, the COVID-19 pandemic hit these households and individuals the hardest economically as well as mentally, causing considerable distress and impaired ability, leading to social anxiety disorders or mental illness⁶. These households and individuals are mostly excluded from the public subsidy system. Psychologists or licensed mental therapists are conducting stress tests and advising these distressed people through a website. Mental care of school children living in social isolation during the school closure is a particular concern. Although online learning programs help mitigate atresia and encourage children to catch up with their learning, some remote islands are not even connected to the Internet. It is ironic that digital technology is expected to overcome the "tyranny of distance"⁷ of remote islands, but the pandemic has revealed that technology has created further disparities, as evidenced by the disadvantages of these island societies.⁸ Anecdotally, it appears as though the stay-at-home policy, even on a voluntary basis, is generating domestic violence and abuse of children. Prejudice and discrimination against corona-infected families and persons are on the rise in all Japanese prefectures.

⁴ *Okinawa Times*, "COVID-19 Special Report." 10 October 2020.

⁵ See Kakazu, H. 2012. *Okinawa in the Asia Pacific*. Okinawa Times.

⁶ *Okinawa Times*, "COVID-19 Special Report." 15 October 2020.

⁷ The term was first coined by a geographer, William Bunge, and popularized by historian Geoffrey Blainey's bestseller

book. See Bunge, W. May 1961. "The Structure of Contemporary American Geographic Research." *The Professional Geographer*. 13(3): 19–23. Blainey, G. 1966. *The Tyranny of Distance: How Distance Shaped Australia's History*. London: Macmillan. This author used the term in the modern economic context of small islands in his books on island sustainability.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 30 October 2020.

Post Covid-19 recovery and the Sustainable Development Goals

The COVID-19 pandemic is providing us with a good incentive to change islands' lifestyles and sustainable policies. Islanders realize the risk of heavy dependency on imported food supply and the inbound tourism industry and have been forced to thinking about diversifying their industrial structure in line with the sustainable and environmentally friendly approaches and strategies. Notably, improved food security systems, sustainable energy and tourism, and remote work should become focal points for the post-COVID-19 era.

Okinawa depends on fossil fuels for about 90% of its energy needs. Our clean and sustainable energy policy is far behind that on the other prefectures. Sustainable tourism is also part of Okinawa's post-COVID-19 agenda. Some Okinawan islands are already suffering from over-tourism, resulting from the increasing number of tourists beyond their carrying capacities. Our food self-sufficiency rate declined from 40% to 27 % in 2019 on a calory basis⁹. In this sense, the pandemic is providing us an excellent opportunity to reconstruct our island lifestyles¹⁰.

⁹ See footnote 1.

¹⁰ See Kakazu, H. 2011. "Challenges for Sustainable Tourism: The Case of Okinawa." In J. Carlsen and Butler, R.

eds. *Island Tourism Development: Journeys to Sustainability*. London: CABI Publication: 171-185.



Caribbean Sea

Small Island States

Barbados

Grenada

Jamaica

Trinidad and Tobago



Jamaica



Barbados



Grenada



Trinidad and Tobago

COVID-19 Island Insights Series

No. 13, March 2021

Barbados

Stacey Alvarez de la Campa

The COVID-19 Island Insights Series is an initiative spearheaded by the Strathclyde Centre for Environmental Law & Governance (SCELG) and the Institute of Island Studies (IIS) at the University of Prince Edward Island in collaboration with Island Innovation. The initiative brings together critical assessments of how specific islands around the world have performed during the COVID-19 pandemic and the extent to which their recovery plans can promote resilience and sustainability in the long term.

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ISSN 2563-6944

Barbados

Population 287, 375¹

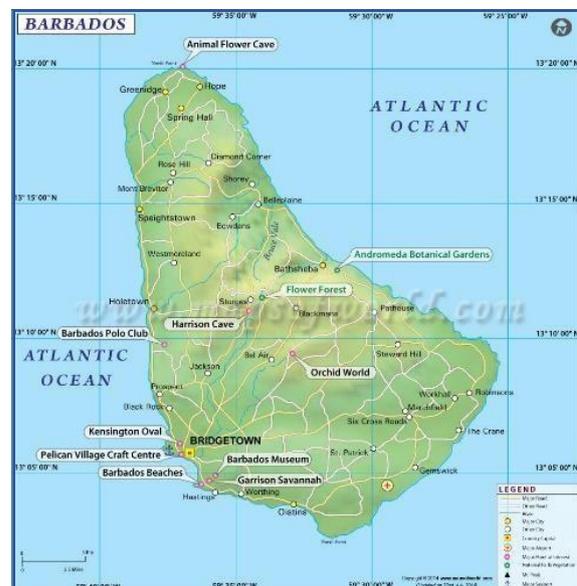
Size 430 km² ²

COVID-19 data³ and timeline⁴

- Number of cases 222 (0.08% of the population, as at 10 December 2020)
- Number of fatalities 7 (0.002% of the population, as at 10 December 2020)
- Schools closed on 19 March 2020; re-opened on 21 September 2020
- Barbados never officially established a travel ban, and officially opened for all tourists on 12 July 2020, with international flights resuming on a phased-in basis, in accordance with the level of risk of the originating country

Stacey Alvarez de la Campa

Stacey Alvarez de la Campa is a Legal Assistant and Educational Consultant who works with Lex Caribbean Attorneys-at-Law, Barbados



Barbados⁵

¹ Data obtained from <https://www.worldometers.info/demographics/barbados-demographics/#pop>

² Data obtained from <https://www.nationsencyclopedia.com/Americas/Barbados-LOCATION-SIZE-AND-EXTENT.html>

³ Data obtained from <https://www.facebook.com/gisbarbados/photos/a.297728590391960/1666524526845686>

⁴ Data obtained from <https://barbadostoday.bb/2020/03/19/schools-wont-open-again-after-all-af->

<https://today.caricom.org/2020/09/21/public-schools-in-barbados-reopen-on-monday/>; <https://www.tripsavvy.com/caribbean-travel-border-reopenings-4845853>; <https://www.paho.org/en/documents/barbados-example-government-leadership-and-regional-cooperation-containing-covid-19-virus>

⁵ Source <https://www.mapsofworld.com/barbados/>

COVID-19 in Barbados

The first two cases of COVID-19 were confirmed in Barbados on 17 March, 2020,⁶ when a 48-year-old visitor to the island and a 39-year-old Barbadian tested positive for coronavirus. Both of these individuals had a recent travel history, having come to Barbados from the United States of America. At that point, the country entered Stage 1 of its response to the pandemic, a response which can generally be categorized as thorough, decisive, and comprehensive.

Barbados implemented crucial early measures in response to these first two cases.⁷ All arriving passengers were screened at points of entry for COVID-19 symptoms, and were required to leave their contact information. Shortly after this, a mandate followed that required all arriving passengers to quarantine for 14 days regardless of whether they had symptoms. As a result of this, most airlines suspended international flights. The Barbados Government Information Service (BGIS) was designated⁸ as the primary source of information on COVID-19 the day after the first case was reported, so the public always had ready access to relevant, accurate information regarding the range of protocols.

There was also an emphasis on testing at the Best-dos Santos Public Health laboratory, which facilitated accurate data in relation to the national COVID-19 statistics.

One of the most significant aspects of the response to the pandemic was the designation and construction of specific facilities for the treatment and isolation of COVID-19 cases.⁹ These facilities eased the burden on the main

(Queen Elizabeth) hospital. Construction began in early March, and an abandoned military base was rebuilt and converted into a hospital and quarantine centre.

On 22 March, 2020, Barbados moved to Stage 2 of its COVID-19 response, when human to human transmission was discovered as a result of contact tracing.¹⁰ The government advised its citizens to limit mass gatherings of more than 25 people, but did not enact any legislative change. In general, Barbadians complied with the guidelines that were recommended, but not yet mandated by the government, and businesses limited the number of people who could enter their premises. Social distancing protocols were enforced, and it became commonplace for everyone to wear masks in public places and for businesses to set up sanitizing stations.

The management and response to COVID-19 in Barbados culminated in a national emergency being declared on 28 March, 2020, when 24 cases of coronavirus were confirmed.¹¹ This was the beginning of Stage 3, when comprehensive lockdown measures were imposed. These measures¹² included the closure of all non-essential businesses (for a month, from early April to early May 2020) and a 24-hour curfew during this period, which prohibited all but essential workers from leaving their homes - except for medical reasons or to visit banks and supermarkets and following a schedule based on the first letter of people's last name. During this period, the sale of alcohol was banned from 3 April to 4 May¹³. (The curfew was later relaxed to evening hours only from May 3 to June 30).

⁶ <https://www.loopnewsbarbados.com/content/barbados-awaiting-covid-19-update>

⁷ <https://www.paho.org/en/documents/barbados-example-government-leadership-and-regional-cooperation-containing-covid-19-virus>

⁸ <https://gisbarbados.gov.bb/covid-19/>

⁹ <https://www.paho.org/en/documents/barbados-example-government-leadership-and-regional-cooperation-containing-covid-19-virus>

¹⁰ <https://www.loopnewsbarbados.com/content/covid-19-person-person-transmissions-barbados-stage-2>

¹¹ <https://www.paho.org/en/documents/barbados-example-government-leadership-and-regional-cooperation-containing-covid-19-virus>

¹² <https://www.paho.org/en/documents/barbados-example-government-leadership-and-regional-cooperation-containing-covid-19-virus>

¹³ <https://www.loopnewsbarbados.com/content/change-petition-launched-lift-alcohol-ban>

In early April, arrangements were made to bring in a contingent of 100 Cuban doctors and nurses with experience in intensive care treatment to focus on serving the needs of COVID-19 patients confined to the quarantine centres.

¹⁴

While there was an overall sense of satisfaction and admiration regarding the way in which the pandemic was handled by the Prime Minister, Mia Mottley, there were disruptions that took a toll on some segments of the population and required major adjustments. For example, the alphabetized system designed to facilitate shopping, banking, etc. often did not allow enough time for the elderly and people with disabilities to get their essential supplies, and saw many such people being exposed to extreme weather conditions while standing in long lines outside of supermarkets and banks. There were also reports of price-gouging by some smaller grocery suppliers, who benefitted from increased customer traffic, as major supermarkets limited their opening hours so as to abide by the curfew.

Key socioeconomic pressures in the Barbados during COVID-19

As a small island developing state that relies heavily on tourism, the Barbadian economy was deeply impacted by the pandemic. In fact, tourism-dependent islands such as Barbados rely on this sector for an average of a 45% contribution to their GDP, with proportionate levels of employment.¹⁵ Hotels and restaurants were closed, resulting in those with jobs in the hospitality sector being laid off. Some of those who did not lose their jobs received pay cuts. There has been a significant amount of pressure placed on the National Insurance Scheme

¹⁴ <https://www.telesurenglish.net/news/Cuban-Medical-Team-Arrive-in-Barbados-to-Help-Fight-COVID-19-20200406-0011.html>

¹⁵ <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/member-states/barbados>

¹⁶ <https://www.loopnewsbarbados.com/content/welfare-applications-increase-because-job-loss-due-covid>

and Welfare Department, that saw a surge in applications as a result of rising unemployment.¹⁶ By May 2020, approximately a quarter of the workforce had filed for unemployment benefits.

¹⁷

Although the issue of food security was brought into sharper focus, food was not scarce. Many informal groups, as well as members of the private sector, banded together to ensure that the most vulnerable and those in need were given food hampers and deliveries of essential supplies. Farmers and vendors provided fresh produce.

Barbados implemented a phased approach to the lockdown exit strategy, and a four-phase plan was outlined by the Prime Minister on 29 April, 2020.¹⁸

For example, during Phase 2, which began on 4 May, 2020, people were allowed to go back to the beaches from 6 a.m. to 9 a.m., and selected sectors were opened up, including Construction and Mining; Finance and Insurance; Legal, Accounting, and Other Professional Services to Support Businesses; and Marine Products.

There were heightened sanitizing measures taken, and when restaurants opened they adjusted their seating so that social distancing guidelines established by the government were adhered to. Specific protocols were also outlined for employers and employees,¹⁹ and to this date, supermarkets and banks still have markers in place to indicate the appropriate distances for customers to stand when queuing up. It is still necessary for face masks to be worn when conducting any business in public.

During the third school term of the 2019 to 2020 academic year, which began on 4 May, teaching took place online for all students. At the end

¹⁷ <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/member-states/barbados>

¹⁸ <https://gisbarbados.gov.bb/blog/phase-2-of-barbados-exit-strategy-begins-may-4/>

¹⁹ <https://today.caricom.org/2020/05/01/barbados-enters-phase-2-of-lock-down-exit-strategy/>

of April, the Ministry of Education established an online platform, as a physical return to classrooms was not possible in light of the restrictions on social gatherings and other protocols which were in place.²⁰ Unfortunately, some students did not have access to the internet at home, or, perhaps more problematically, did not have the benefit of a home environment that was particularly conducive to learning. This difficult home environment was due a variety of factors, including the fact that parents also had to work from home, or had to go out to work and did not have access to the resources necessary to make arrangement for proper childcare. Additionally, students from households dealing with addiction and/or abuse were placed at greater risk. It was also extremely challenging for parents who faced the pressure of having to try to obtain multiple devices for children who either attended different schools, or were at the same school but in different classes.

As a result, the Ministry of Education announced that, at the end of the academic year 2019/2020, no student would be given marks on their reports, but teachers would give detailed comments on student performance.

Post Covid-19 recovery on Barbados

There was a level of concern amongst the populace that, as a result of living in a territory which imports the vast majority of its food, Barbadians would struggle with access to food as a result of the pandemic. However, there was an emphasis placed on buying local produce and supporting local business, which boosted the local farmers' earnings and paved the way for a focus on sustainability.

Crucially, Barbadians are seeking to recover from the effects of the pandemic by shifting their

focus away from traditional tourism as a main source of foreign exchange. Recently, the government launched the "12 Month Welcome Stamp" visa program to facilitate a revival of the flagging levels of foreign exchange and to counteract the inevitable negative effects of global lockdowns. The rationale behind the 12 Month Welcome Stamp harnesses the concept of the digital nomad, and seeks to promote Barbados as an oasis from COVID for foreigners able to work remotely,²¹ offering tax-free stays for 12 months or longer for workers and businesses that do not depend on a fixed physical location. According to a report published by PAHO in July, 2020,²² Barbados is particularly appealing as a long-term destination because of its political stability, well-developed tourism infrastructure, relatively high standard of living and the fastest fibre-optics Internet and mobile services in the Caribbean.

It should be noted that, in accordance with the policies put in place during the early stages of the pandemic, strict protocols have been put in place for all visitors to minimize the risk of contagion. Countries of origin have been categorised according to the risk level they present, and the government has recategorised countries and made entry requirements more stringent, as necessary.²³

Another aspect of the post-COVID recovery has been an upsurge in businesses in the hospitality sector catering to the economic reality of locals by offering attractively-discounted "staycations", or special rates for anyone with a Barbados ID card. Small farmers have also continued to benefit from the reliance on local rather than imported products, and have started offering delivery services to cater to the boost in their Barbadian clientele.

²⁰ <https://www.loopslu.com/content/ministry-education-no-marks-students-end-term-3>

²¹ <https://www.paho.org/en/documents/barbados-example-government-leadership-and-regional-cooperation-containing-covid-19-virus>

²² <https://www.paho.org/en/documents/barbados-example-government-leadership-and-regional-cooperation-containing-covid-19-virus>

²³ <https://www.visitbarbados.org/covid-19-travel-guidelines-2020#health-protocol>

The government of Barbados was among the first group of countries to make an effort to secure the vaccine²⁴, with eight people, including the Prime Minister and the Attorney General, already receiving the first dose.²⁵ However, it is not yet available to the wider public.

It seems as if Barbadians are showing an awareness of resilience, and the willingness to shift some traditional economic paradigms in their efforts to tackle the effects of this pandemic.

Post Covid-19 recovery and the Sustainable Development Goals

Numerous post COVID-19 economic stimulus packages are being put in place,²⁶ including:

- A USD100 million Tourism Fund Facility to provide urgent working capital and investment loans for the upgrade of Barbadian hotels,
- A USD 20 million VAT Loan Fund for companies who registered to pay Value Added Tax (VAT) and can prove that their cash flow was severely disrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic and have implemented measures to contain the outbreak,
- A USD 10 million Small Business Wage Fund for firms too small to be eligible for VAT or VAT refunds to help them cope with the challenges of the COVID-19 environment.

The government of Barbados seems to be embracing the lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic to further cultivate a focus on the relevant Sustainable Development Goals. Prior to

the pandemic, the Prime Minister unveiled an economic recovery plan to focus primarily on sustainable growth,²⁷ and which clearly reflected the following Sustainable Development Goals: Goal 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), Goal 10 (Reduced Inequality), and Goal 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities). This plan, known by the acronym BERT (Barbados Economic Recovery and Transformation), also showcased a commitment to Goal 13 (Climate Action), and Goal 14 (Life Below Water).

During the first quarter of 2020, the government had planned to deliver its Voluntary National Review (VNR). This coincided with the indelibly harrowing and devastating socioeconomic effects of the pandemic, effects which called for drastic and fundamental shifts in future global plans, strategies, and structures. In light of this, the government of Barbados is now focusing specifically on Goal 17 (Partnerships to Achieve the Goal), which now has more relevance than ever.

²⁴ *Barbados deposits funds for COVID-19 vaccines – NationNews Barbados — nationnews.com*

²⁵ *Barbados – Eight persons, including Prime Minister Mia Amor Mottley, have received their first round of the COVID-19 vaccine – PANCAP*

²⁶ *<https://home.kpmg/xx/en/home/insights/2020/04/barbados-government-and-institution-measures-in-response-to-covid.html>*

²⁷ *<https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/member-states/barbados>*



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COVID-19 Island Insights Series

No. 3, November 2020

Grenada

John N. Telesford

The COVID-19 Island Insights Series is an initiative spearheaded by the Strathclyde Centre for Environmental Law & Governance (SCELG) and the Institute of Island Studies (IIS) at the University of Prince Edward Island in collaboration with Island Innovation. The initiative brings together critical assessments of how specific islands around the world have performed during the COVID-19 pandemic and the extent to which their recovery plans can promote resilience and sustainability in the long term.

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Grenada, Carriacou and Petite Martinique

Population: 113, 094 (July 2020 est.)¹

Size: 344 sq. km.²

In addition to the island of Grenada, the tri-island state of Grenada includes two smaller islands - Carriacou and Petite Martinique. The population and size include all three islands.

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COVID-19 data and timeline

Number of cases 29 [0.026% of the population vs 0.01% in the Caribbean region]³

Number of fatalities 0 [0% of cases]⁴

Schools closed on 16 March 2020; reopened in 7 September (schools operate with various approaches, including blended learning, shifts, to reduce capacity for face-to-face sessions)

Travel restrictions enacted on 22 March and lifted on 1 August 2020, with a colour coded system based on risk level of source⁵ countries, to commercial and charter air traffic.



GRENADA⁶

¹ Data source: <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/gj.html>

² Data source: <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/gj.html>

³Data source: <https://covid19.gov.gd/>

⁴ Ibid

⁵ <https://covid19.gov.gd/travel/>

⁶ Source: <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/gj.html>

COVID-19 on Grenada

On 22 March 2020, Grenada closed its borders to air and sea commercial traffic, on the same day that the first imported case of COVID-19 was announced. In a preemptive move, the Government of Grenada closed all schools on 16 March, while introducing other measures, such as ‘social distancing’, a term the Prime Minister referred to as being new⁷. The St. George’s University, one of the largest private employers on the island, asked its ‘international students’ to return home during that same period⁸ and all hotels began to shut down (impacts to be discussed in the next section), while the general population struggled to adhere to the voluntary calls for social distancing and best public hygiene practices. The plea by the authorities, seemed to have fallen on deaf ears, resulting in a 21-day limited state of emergency being imposed on the country. Limited access to food, medical and other essential services was allowed between the hours of 5:00 a.m. and 7:00 p.m.⁹ Unfortunately, the number of cases of COVID-19 continued to rise, with more imported cases identified, with some traceable to patient zero. This led to the imposition of a 24-hour/7-day mandatory curfew which began on 30 March, 2020 and was eventually extended to 20 April, 2020. All these mitigation measures were supported by the Emergency Powers (COVID-19) (NO 2), Statutory Rules and Orders # 16 (SRO 16) 2020 promulgated on Monday, 30 March, 2020; and was updated on a weekly basis.

As of 1 November, 2020, Grenada reported twenty-nine (29) cases of COVID19 infections, with twenty-seven (27) recoveries and no fatalities. International travel recommenced on August 1, 2020 with a limited number of charter and commercial flights. Source countries were zoned based on risk levels. Passengers travelling from low risk counties require a negative PCR test taken within 7-days of arriving into

Grenada, with no quarantine restrictions on arrivals, while those from high-risk countries are required to be quarantined for 4-days. Residents with a negative PCR test taken on the fourth day will be allowed to enter the community, while visitors may choose to test and if tested negative can enter the community. Hotels can apply to reopen under strict guidelines. In the meantime, the ‘limited state of emergency’ is still in effect, with no curfew, but citizens are required to wear face coverings when outside their places of residence, which is enforced when entering public and private spaces and on public transportation. Mass gatherings are restricted in numbers, especially at funerals and weddings. Schools and churches have reopened, with schools operating under shift systems and blended learning. Grenada is open once again for business but, as with many places, it looks a bit different as social distancing and face coverings are imposed and policed.

Key socioeconomic pressures in Grenada during COVID-19

At the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic, especially during the three weeks of the 24/7 curfew, the socioeconomic challenges escalated. One of the greatest impacts was the loss of jobs, mainly in the tourism sector, with many negative spin-off effects on support services such transportation, agriculture and construction. Another key impact was the closure of the St. George’s University (SGU). An International Monetary Fund (IMF) report noted: “...plummeting hotel occupancy rates, mounting request for moratoria on debt servicing, dwindling constructing and investment activity and other sharp adverse ripple effects of the outbreak across all economic sectors”¹⁰. Moreover, the report projected a decline in tourism exports (such as revenues from internal purchases) of

⁷ <https://www.nowgrenada.com/2020/03/prime-ministers-address-on-covid-19/>

⁸ <https://www.nowgrenada.com/2020/03/st-georges-university-follows-guidance-to-stem-the-spread-of-covid-19/>

⁹ <https://www.nowgrenada.com/2020/03/announcement-of-limited-state-of-emergency/>

¹⁰ <https://www.imf.org/en/Publications/CR/Issues/2020/05/13/Grenada-Request-for-Disbursement-Under-the-Rapid-Credit-Facility-Press-Release-Staff-Report-49412>

about 50% year-on-year in 2020, exacerbated by the closure of the SGU, with an overall decline in economic growth of approximately -9.2% in 2020¹¹. In August 2020, the Government of Grenada revised its revenue collection downward, projecting a decline of approximately 40% due to COVID-19¹².

Job losses, and the closure of small businesses such as barber shops and hair salons, fishing, agriculture, construction and bars; and the cessation of the private sector-driven public transportation system, resulted in a stark impact on the livelihoods of many of the persons involved in these micro-small-medium enterprises (MSME). To ease the pain the Government initiated an economic support package¹³, including assistance to hundreds of these MSME owners, with subsistence support for three months. Salary support was also provided to the tourism and hospitality sector. Moreover, as fishers were not allowed to ply their trade for a while, fish as a healthy protein faced a temporary shortage; while locally grown fruits and vegetables also went into short supply, as farmers had limited or no access to their farms. Although there was no chronic shortage of food and other basic necessities, the impact on individuals who lost their source of income was profound.

Generally, social life is not the same as before the pandemic, as social activities are restricted by law. This includes parties, mass beach gatherings and other normal social activities. For the first time in many years, Grenada did not have its carnival celebration, which occurs in August of each year. As is the case with many Caribbean islands, Carnival is normally one of Grenada's most popular traditional social activities, bringing with it a spike in social networking and economic activity, contributing to growth. In fact, what appeared to be a 'protest-like' activity occurred on the two scheduled days of carnival

as revelers took to the street, claiming that they 'needed to release the stresses of lockdown'.

Post Covid-19 recovery on Grenada: A different approach

The key approach to Grenada's post COVID-19 recovery is enshrined in the Government's appointment of seven (7) subcommittees as part of the task force for rebuilding Grenada's economy¹⁴:

1. Tourism and citizen by investment (CBI)
2. Construction (private and public)
3. Education services (St. George's University)
4. Micro-small and medium enterprise
5. Agriculture and fisheries
6. Wholesale and retail trading and manufacturing
7. E-commerce/digitization

These committees were tasked with drawing-up sector-related plans for recovery. Although the initial plans delivered to the Prime Minister were not available for public consumption, from observation, the Committees cover the key economic sectors, especially agriculture. In fact, food security has once again been scrutinized under COVID-19, which may have sparked a 'back yard gardening' project by the Ministry of Agriculture and the Climate Smart Agriculture Project. Five hundred beneficiaries, including vulnerable households and home care centres for the aged, benefited from the program.¹⁵

Despite this multi-sectoral approach, tourism seems to be at the forefront of the recovery effort. In this regard, commercial air traffic is

¹¹ Ibid

¹² <https://www.nowgrenada.com/2020/08/government-to-collect-181-million-less-in-revenue-due-to-covid-19/>

¹³ <https://www.nowgrenada.com/2020/03/prime-ministers-national-address-20-march-2020/>

¹⁴ <https://www.nowgrenada.com/2020/04/cabinet-approves-appointment-of-7-sub-committees/>

¹⁵ <https://www.nowgrenada.com/2020/08/extension-as-sistants-training-as-part-of-covid-19-backyard-gardening-initiative/>

slowly increasing; some hotels which can create a 'bubble' are being considered for reopening; and limited cruise activity has been discussed, with the option of having designated beaches for tourists to visit, excluding them from the rest of the public¹⁶. The construction of a number of hotels/beach resorts has (re)started, indicating that stay-over tourism is high on the economic development agenda. Moreover, the SGU is considered as 'educational tourism', contributing significantly to the economic growth and development of the island's economy. There is no wonder then, that a task force has been established to seek out the most efficient, safe and fastest manner to get students back on campus.

On the ground, economic activity outside of tourism seems to be slowly picking up. Many of the micro-small and medium enterprises are reopening. Private buses are plying their trade with maximum load capacities restored, but with restrictions, including regular sanitizing and wearing of face coverings. Restaurants are allowed to serve food indoors; bars are functioning and other key activities are picking up. This multi-sectoral approach is a critical effort by the government to get the economy functioning again, yet the fruits of this labor may not be immediately discernable.

Post Covid-19 recovery and the Sustainable Development Goals

The COVID-19 pandemic occurred at the same time the Government of Grenada launched its National Sustainable Development Plan, 2020-2035 (NSDP), which is tightly coupled to the Sustainable Development Agenda 2030, driven by the SDGs¹⁷. The NSDP is implemented through Medium Term Action Plans (MTAPs). The Technical Working Group (TWG), the body responsible for the drafting of the NSDP, agreed that no major revisions of the plan were required; but that some of the priorities in the

NSDP would need to be reset, entailing the fast tracking and/or delaying of some actions. In the MTAP 2020-2022, these priority actions were drafted, vis-à-vis developing a plan for dealing with public health issues and expanding the National Disaster Management Agency (NADMA) to respond to major pandemics¹⁸. These are aligned to SDG 3: health. Grenada is committed to implementing and meeting the SDGs; however, as with many other nations, the global pandemic will pose new challenges in accomplishing these goals.

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COVID-19 Island Insights Series

No. 14, March 2021

Jamaica

Suzana N. Russell

The COVID-19 Island Insights Series is an initiative spearheaded by the Strathclyde Centre for Environmental Law & Governance (SCELG) and the Institute of Island Studies (IIS) at the University of Prince Edward Island in collaboration with Island Innovation. The initiative brings together critical assessments of how specific islands around the world have performed during the COVID-19 pandemic and the extent to which their recovery plans can promote resilience and sustainability in the long term.

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Jamaica

Population 2,726,667 ¹

Size 10,991 square km ²

Jamaica is the third largest island in the Caribbean. The economy is heavily dependent on tourism (35% of GDP), with a record 4.3 million tourist arrivals in 2017³.

COVID-19 data⁴ and timeline (as at 19 February 2021)

- Number of cases 20,016 (~0.7% of the population)
- Number of fatalities 381 (~0.014% of the population)
- Schools closed on 13 March 2020; initially for 2 weeks. All schools operated virtually for the remainder of 2020. As at January 2021, many schools have reopened with a blended approach, i.e. a combination of face-to-face and online classes.
- Travel restrictions have been enacted. Travel ban imposed on China on 31 January 2020. Effective 25 March 2020, the borders were closed to all persons. Controlled re-entry of Jamaican citizens and residents started in April 2020.

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Jamaica⁵

¹ Data obtained from the Statistical Institute of Jamaica.

² Data obtained from the CIA World FactBook.

³ Data obtained from the Jamaica Information Service.

⁴ Data obtained from the Ministry of Health Jamaica and the Jamaica Information Service

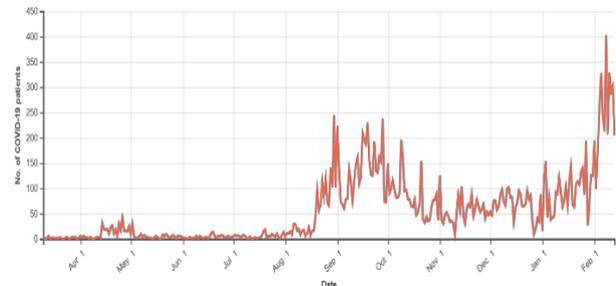
⁵ Source: <https://www.britannica.com/place/Jamaica>

COVID-19 on Jamaica

Jamaica recorded its first COVID-19 case on 10 March 2020. The following day, the country recorded its second confirmed case. Both cases were women who had traveled to Jamaica from the United Kingdom. On 13 March 2020, all schools including early childhood institutions, teachers' and community colleges were closed, initially for 2 weeks. Also, that same day, two entire communities were placed in quarantine for two weeks after it was discovered that two new confirmed cases were close contacts of the country's first confirmed case ('patient 0'). Security forces were immediately deployed to these communities to control the movements of residents. By the end of March 2020, Jamaica had recorded 38 cases, mainly imported but some from local transmission. The country quickly entered community spread phase and on 30 August 2020, 244⁶ new cases were recorded (the highest daily case count until this was surpassed in January and February 2021, where new cases rose to a high of 468⁷ on 17 February). Plans for the resumption of in-person teaching were abandoned as the number of daily cases continued to rise in September (Figure 1) and schools started the new term with the continuation of online classes.

Jamaica reopened its borders to international travelers on 15 June 2020, after imposing travel bans on several countries including France, Germany, Spain, United Kingdom and South Korea. A travel ban was imposed on China on 31 January 2020. Concerns about the new British variant of the COVID-19 virus saw a travel ban imposed again on flights from the UK on Dec 21, 2020. In fact, at the time of the announcement of this new travel ban on flights from the UK, one flight was already en route to Jamaica; all 302 passengers were placed in state quarantine as they landed⁸.

Figure 1: Daily new COVID-19 cases, Jamaica⁹



In an attempt to slow the spread of the virus, several measures have been implemented over the past eleven months, some more restrictive than others. In March, the government issued work-from-home directives to non-essential workers, stay-at-home orders for residents and citizens 75 years and older, nightly nationwide curfews, a ban on in-person dining at restaurants, and the closure of bars, beaches, gyms and entertainment spots. To maintain that delicate balance between reopening the economy and slowing the spread, some of these restrictions have been loosened, but many are still in place, such as nightly curfews and stay-at-home orders for the elderly. A national mask mandate, instituted in April 2020, is still in effect.

Based on the data in Figure 1, the initial intensive measures mandated by the government appeared to have kept the number of infections low in the early months of March to July. However, as the country continued its phased reopening of the economy, in addition to a general election on 3 September 2020 which saw large crowds taking part in political campaigns, the daily confirmed cases increased significantly in August and September. While the recent daily cases of infections continue to fluctuate, the number is still not as low as the early months

⁶ John Hopkins University COVID-19 Statistics Data

⁷ John Hopkins University COVID-19 Statistics Data

⁸ Ministry of Health and Wellness, December 22, 2020. Jamaica Information Service. <https://jis.gov.jm/302-travelers-from-the-uk-now-in-state-quarantine/>

⁹ Source: John Hopkins University.

and cases continue to surge in different parishes across the island¹⁰. Since the start of 2021, the numbers have skyrocketed, with a record 1,950 new cases between 7 and 13 February¹¹.

Key socioeconomic pressures in Jamaica during COVID-19

As with most economies around the world, the Jamaican economy has been significantly impacted by the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, with the economy expecting to contract by 5% (IMF, 2020¹²). Adverse impacts on the tourism sector, which accounts for 35% of GDP, coupled with the fall in alumina prices (the main export commodity accounting for 3.6% of GDP) have resulted in a concomitant increase in unemployment. The tourism sector has been decimated: 120,000 persons or 75% of the workers were laid off by April 2020¹³. Remittances, a very important source of earnings for the country at approximately 16% of GDP in 2018, were severely curtailed in the early months of the pandemic, as the Jamaican diaspora in countries such as the US struggled to cope with the prospect of their short-term unemployment. This severely impacted the lives of the almost 51% of Jamaican citizens who receive remittances. However, there was a recovery from the initial onslaught of COVID-19 and remittances were up by 42% in June¹⁴ and 38% in September¹⁵.

The government implemented social and economic support through its CARE¹⁶ Programme, which provided assistance in the form of cash

transfers to vulnerable individuals and small businesses (IMF 2020); nearly 500,000¹⁷ Jamaican received this assistance. Measures adopted included tax credits for micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs), reduction in regulatory fees for certain commodities, and a waiver on fees for certain personal protective equipment and sanitation supplies. Commercial banks also joined the effort by offering customers the option to defer payments and providing new lines of credit and other services to the most affected sectors.¹⁸ Other industries such as wholesale, retail, manufacturing and construction have all been impacted by the pandemic. The once vibrant entertainment industry is still being impacted by the nightly curfews.

A study of 500+ households with children conducted by the UNICEF/Caribbean Policy Research Institute (CAPRI) (2020) gives some insight into the social impacts of the pandemic. The findings from the survey showed that respondents lost an average of 46% of their income. Although 86% were able to make up for this lost income by using up their savings, this effectively eroded their financial safety nets. Forty-four percent of the 505 households also experienced food shortages and tried to cope by having fewer and smaller meals. The closure of schools and the emotional impact of this is reflected by children in the study who are displaying elevated levels of frustration (41%), clinginess (39%), overeating (57%) and fear (21%)¹⁹.

Connectivity issues persist across the island and this absence of adequate bandwidth is negatively impacting the government's effort to ensure that no child is left behind²⁰. Like many

¹⁰ <http://jamaica-gleaner.com/article/news/20210125/tufton-announces-tighter-measures-manchester-covid-cases-surge>

¹¹ Ministry of Health and Wellness COVID-19 Clinical Management Summary. <https://www.moh.gov.jm/updates/coronavirus/covid-19-clinical-management-summary/>

¹² IMF Country Focus (May 2020). Jamaica ramps up social and economic support in COVID-19 response.

¹³ Jamaica Observer, April 19, 2020. http://www.jamaicaobserver.com/news/bartlett-appeals-for-regional-unity-in-responding-to-covid-19_192353

¹⁴ Caricom Business (Sep 2020). Jamaica remittances rebound in June. Caricom Business Newsletter Vol. 3 No. 36

¹⁵ Jamaica Observer, November 29, 2020

¹⁶ Covid Allocation of Resources for Employees (CARE)

¹⁷ Ministry of Finance and Public Service. <https://www.wecare.gov.jm/>

¹⁸ Cucagna, M. and Johnson, S. (2020). Return to paradise: A poverty perspective on Jamaica's COVID-19 recovery response. November 17, 2020.

¹⁹ UNICEF and CAPRI (2020). The effect of the COVID pandemic on Jamaica's children preliminary results.

<https://www.unicef.org/jamaica/reports/effect-covid-19-pandemic-jamaican-children-preliminary-results>

²⁰ Jamaica Gleaner. January 25, 2021. Connectivity issues impacting resumption of face-to-face classes.

countries around the world there are increasing concerns about the mental health of Jamaicans with fears that COVID-19 outcomes such as social isolation, financial losses, increased stress, increased intimate partner violence, increased sexual abuse, even among children, will result in increased depression and suicide²¹.

Post Covid-19 recovery on Jamaica: A different approach

On 27 April 2020, the Prime Minister appointed the COVID-19 Economic Recovery Task Force comprising of a 28-member committee from government, private sector, and academia to develop plans for Jamaica's economic recovery. Recommendations by the task force that are deemed essential to the country's recovery include the following:

1. Recommit to, and accelerate, macro-fiscal reform and business climate improvements
2. Restore tourism
3. Deepen local supply chains
4. Digitize and modernize Jamaica
5. Diversify Jamaica's economic base
6. Increase economic formalization (currently, informal employment accounts for 47% of employment)
7. Strengthen the safety net and pursue labour market reforms

With such a huge dependence on tourism, it is not surprising that tourism is at the heart of Jamaica's post COVID-19 recovery plans. Policies that are being considered in order to build back a safer, more resilient and equitable tourism product include:

1. Strengthening local supply chains by creating a tax incentive programme for large-scale farms and warehousing

- aimed at purchasing from local farmers and selling in the tourism industry.
2. Focus on rural area tourism to benefit rural communities by transforming these 'sleepy areas into buzzing centres of economic activities'.

Although the future remains uncertain, the government has projected a shorter recovery period compared to the global economic recession of 2008/9, largely due to the relative strength and buffers in the economy and the many stimulus packages introduced²².

Post Covid-19 recovery and the Sustainable Development Goals

The Planning Institute of Jamaica (PIOJ) anticipates slippage on the pace of the country achieving development targets that are being implemented under Vision 2030 Jamaica (the National Development Plan) and aligned to the SDGs. While the country remains committed to the SDGs²³, the government is currently reviewing the strategic implementation of Vision 2030²⁴. This review, which began in November 2020, includes the 2030 Agenda for the Sustainable Development Goals. While no deadline is given for the completion of the review, the government has noted the critical importance of ensuring that SDG policies, particularly those related to human capital development and social protections, are integrated in any new economic and business practices in a post COVID-19 recovery. In keeping with this goal, the government has responded to this pandemic through social measures such as reduction in the general consumption tax (GCT) from 16.5 to 15% on all products taxed with GCT; supporting employees with transfers of cash for workers who were laid off; general grants for barbers, hairdressers, bar and nightclub operators; assistance to small farmers; assistance for the

²¹ Jamaica Observer, September 10, 2020. Suicide watch

²² Jamaica Information Service. <https://jis.gov.jm/jamaica-to-un-country-will-recover-faster-from-covid-19-than-for-the-08-09-global-recession/>

²³ Jamaica Information Service. <https://jis.gov.jm/jamaica-leading-global-conversations-towards-a-sustainable-and-green-recovery-after-covid-19>

²⁴ Jamaica Information Service. <https://jis.gov.jm/government-reviews-long-term-national-development-plan/>

homeless and deferral of student loans and interest payments. In its post-pandemic recovery, Jamaica is not approaching its commitment to the SDGs with pessimism but instead the country remains committed to moving beyond business as usual and embracing a “new normal” that “leaves no one behind”²⁵.

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²⁵ Wayne Henry, 2020. PIOJ. Keynote speech on COVID-19 and Beyond: Perspectives from Jamaica’s experience in inte-

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COVID-19 Island Insights Series

No. 4, November 2020

Trinidad and Tobago

Preeya S. Mohan and Richard Ramsawak

The COVID-19 Island Insights Series is an initiative spearheaded by the Strathclyde Centre for Environmental Law & Governance (SCELG) and the Institute of Island Studies (IIS) at the University of Prince Edward Island in collaboration with Island Innovation. The initiative brings together critical assessments of how specific islands around the world have performed during the COVID-19 pandemic and the extent to which their recovery plans can promote resilience and sustainability in the long term.

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Population 1,328,019 (of which about 60,874 is in Tobago)¹

Size 5,131 km² (of which 300 km² is Tobago)²

This twin-island republic is the southern-most country in the Caribbean Sea. Tobago, the smaller of the two islands, can be described as a subnational island jurisdiction and has been a ward of Trinidad since 1899.

The main economic activities are oil and gas (Trinidad) and tourism (Tobago).

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COVID-19 data and timeline

(as of 3rd September 2020)

Number of cases 1,920 [0.14% of the population]

Number of deaths 28 [0.002% of the population]

Schools closed on 16 March 2020; will reopen virtually in September (universities continued teaching online)

Travel restrictions have been enacted. 16 March border closed to everyone except Trinidad and Tobago nationals and health workers. 22 March borders closed to everyone, including nationals.



TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO³

¹ Data obtained from the Central Statistical Office, Trinidad and Tobago.

² Data obtained from the Central Statistical Office, Trinidad and Tobago.

³ Source: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Trinidad_and_Tobago#/media/File:Trinidad_and_Tobago_-_Location_Map_\(2013\)_-_TTO_-_UNOCHA.svg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Trinidad_and_Tobago#/media/File:Trinidad_and_Tobago_-_Location_Map_(2013)_-_TTO_-_UNOCHA.svg)

COVID-19 on Trinidad and Tobago

On 12 March 2020 Trinidad and Tobago had its first COVID-19 case, a returning resident from abroad. This situation eventually led to local transmission of the virus as there were primary and secondary contact cases. Up to 16 July, there were 133 positive cases and 8 deaths attributed mainly to imported cases and local transmission. However, more recently the country has been experiencing community spread through primary, secondary and tertiary contacts, and as of 3 September the country has recorded over 1, 920 cases and over 28 deaths.⁴

Restrictions in Trinidad and Tobago were imposed nationally. Travel restrictions to and from specific countries (initially China and later on South Korea, Singapore, Japan, Italy, Germany, France and Spain) were implemented starting January 2020, and the subsequent closure of Trinidad and Tobago's borders occurred on 16 March to everyone except Trinidad and Tobago nationals and health workers, and on 22 March the borders were closed to everyone including nationals. Nationals wishing to return home must apply for a state exemption, and, if granted, upon their return must be tested for COVID-19 and placed into quarantine for 14 days. On 12 March the cruise ship season was brought to a premature halt.⁵

Closure of all early childcare and educational institutions including primary and secondary schools and vocational institutes took place on 16 March. The University of the West Indies went into an emergency virtual mode and was allowed to continue operations.

Trinidad and Tobago's most restrictive phase occurred between 29 March and 15 April with a national lockdown and stay-at-home orders for non-essential workers, along with the closure of

beaches, rivers, hotels, restaurants, bars, manufacturing operations and cinemas. A cessation was also placed on mass gatherings.

A parallel healthcare system dedicated specifically for COVID treatment and quarantine was established to avoid overburdening the existing health system. The government, led by the Ministry of Health, also embarked on near-daily information press briefings to update the population in terms of the number of infections and deaths as well as new measures taken to counteract the spread of the virus. Geo-spatial maps were also updated regularly showing locations of new infections. To enforce the public health restrictions the police increased patrols at all times.

Collectively, the above measures contributed to Trinidad and Tobago being ranked first in the world in May 2020 by the University of Oxford Government Response Tracker (OxGRT) in terms of readiness to reopen.⁶ However, a phased reopening of the economy, accompanied by an intensive national election campaign in early August, has led to an exponential increase in new COVID-19 infections, particularly due to community spread. This has forced the government to rethink its approach to control the spread of the virus, and a new round of Stay in Place Orders (SIPOs) have been initiated.

Key socioeconomic pressures in Trinidad and Tobago during COVID-19

The measures employed to fight COVID-19 have brought about significant economic and social challenges in a country heavily dependent on the energy sector. Even before the crisis, T&T was experiencing an economic downturn primarily as a result of low international oil and gas prices (see Figure 1). The lockdown measures have placed a further strain on local economic activity as persons have lost their jobs or experienced reduced incomes, while supply chains have been disrupted, and there

⁴ <http://www.health.gov.tt/sitepages/default.aspx?id=293>

⁵ <https://www.looptt.com/content/government-suspends-cruise-ship-season-due-covid-19>

⁶ <https://www.bsg.ox.ac.uk/research/research-projects/coronavirus-government-response-tracker>

has been reduced demand for goods and services (IDB 2020). The closure of the borders has led to several hotels and tourist services temporarily closing down. This is particularly devastating for Tobago since the island is heavily dependent on tourism. A special Tourism Accommodation Grant was given to these operators to support them during the crisis. The local entertainment sector, construction sector and most of the manufacturing sector are considered non-essential and were closed temporarily. Finally, depressed international energy prices, together with falling local production, are expected to reduce economic activity and investment in the local energy sector, along with exports and government revenue.

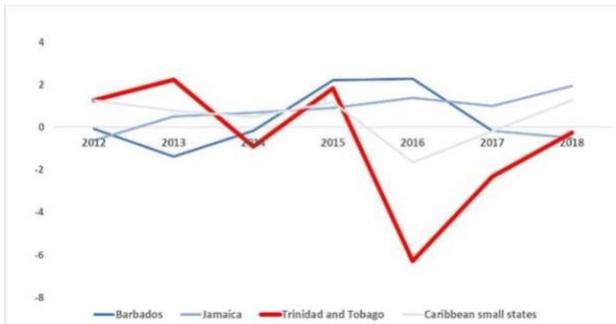


Figure 1: Gross Domestic Product Growth, Caribbean countries (in % annual change)

The closure of the borders has led to an influx of approximately 19,000 nationals, with many still left stranded overseas.⁷ The majority of persons stranded outside are students and workers in particular cruise ship workers and oil and gas workers, but also includes persons who left the country for medical treatment and for leisure travel. Further, there are concerns about children being away from school over an extended period, and the ability of schools to re-open in a virtual format, expected for September. In the nation, there is a significant digital divide, and it is expected that 60,000 students do not have

the resources to access online learning,⁸ while internet penetration rates stand at just 77%.⁹ Additionally, stay-at-home restrictions and fear of contagion have raised concerns regarding mental health, domestic violence and unequal distribution of childcare responsibilities (ECLAC 2020).

Post Covid-19 recovery on Trinidad and Tobago: A different approach

The combination of the pandemic and low energy prices has generated over TT\$4 billion in losses to the local economy from January to March 2020.¹⁰ The country has taken a multi-dimensional approach in its COVID-19 response, inclusive of the following policy objectives:

1. Macroeconomic measures—additional liquidity into the commercial banking system, a moratorium on mortgage loans and installment loan payments, and reduced interest rates and late fees on credit cards.
2. Fiscal measures—payment of outstanding VAT and income tax refunds and overdue payables owed by the government, provision of a Liquidity Support Loan Programme to credit unions to facilitate the provision of loans to individuals and small businesses; special grant for hoteliers in Tobago to upgrade their facilities.
3. Monetary measures—reduction of the reserve requirement for commercial banks and the Repo rate, or rate at which the Central Bank lends money to commercial banks.

⁷ <https://www.diplomacy.edu/blog/first-month-covid-trinidad-and-tobago>

⁸ <https://www.guardian.co.tt/news/60000-students-suffering-6.2.1109261.6ee28d9d13>

⁹ <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1055521/internet-penetration-trinidad-tobago/#:~:text=Internet%20penetration%20has%20seen%20a,from%2048.5%20percent%20in%202010.>

¹⁰ http://planning.gov.tt/sites/default/files/Report%20of%20the%20Roadmap%20to%20Recovery%20Committee_1st_.pdf

On 16 April the Prime Minister appointed a High-Level Multi-Sectoral Committee comprised of representatives from government, private sector, civil society, labour and academia with the mandate to develop a plan for the reopening of society and the road to economic recovery for the post-pandemic period. The “Roadmap” is intended to guide the government’s actions in the immediate short-term to cope with the fallout from the pandemic, as well as the transformation of the economy and the accelerated and sustained development of the society over the medium- to long-term.¹¹ To achieve these objectives the government intends to:

1. Expand social protection and deepen the involvement of civil society organizations
2. Increase agriculture production to reduce dependence on imports
3. Strengthen the food value chain
4. Stimulate activity in the construction sector and infrastructure projects
5. Providing relief to businesses and consumers
6. Provide financial relief through banking, insurance, and credit unions
7. Sustain economic activity in the energy sector
8. Support a resurgence of Tobago business
9. Expand local tourism
10. Build a digital economy by increasing e-government solutions and services

The government has had to draw down on savings from the Heritage and Stabilization Fund as well as borrow from multilateral institutions to fund recovery efforts, further increasing long-term public debt.

¹¹ Roadmap available at http://planning.gov.tt/sites/default/files/Report%20of%20the%20Roadmap%20to%20Recovery%20Committee_1st_.pdf

Post Covid-19 recovery and the Sustainable Development Goals

The government intends to adopt the call by the United Nations to “Leave No One Behind” in response to the challenges of COVID-19 and the ensuing economic instability (Ministry of Planning 2020). The government has responded through social measures to ensure the safety and security of citizens including food support to low-income households and children on the school feeding program; income support to beneficiaries on public assistance and disability grants; rental assistance; support to NGOs to assist socially displaced persons; and salary relief grants. These challenges have deepened the resolve of the government to sustain its commitment to achieving the SDGs through the implementation of Vision 2030, the country’s national development strategy.

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North Atlantic Ocean

Small Island States

Iceland

Sub-National Island Jurisdictions

Azores

Canary Islands

Newfoundland and Labrador

Prince Edward Island

Shetland Islands



Canary Islands



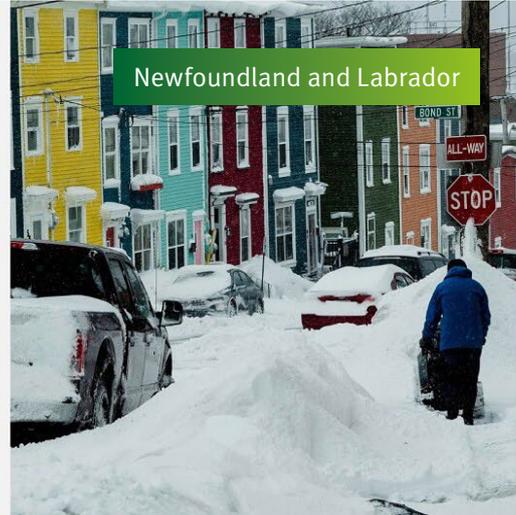
Azores



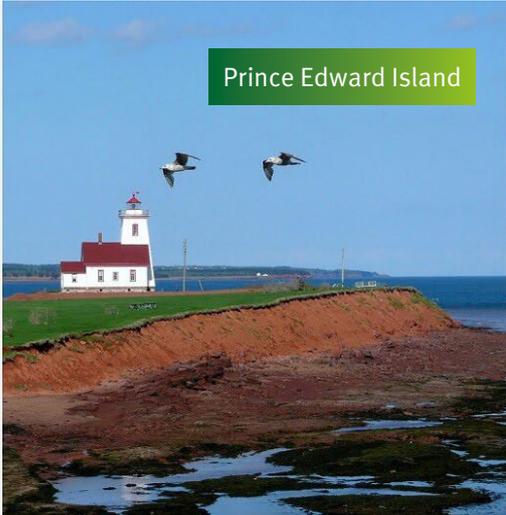
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COVID-19 Island Insights Series

No. 17, March 2021

Iceland

Pia Hansson and Auður Birna Stefánsdóttir

The COVID-19 Island Insights Series is an initiative spearheaded by the Strathclyde Centre for Environmental Law & Governance (SCELG) and the Institute of Island Studies (IIS) at the University of Prince Edward Island in collaboration with Island Innovation. The initiative brings together critical assessments of how specific islands around the world have performed during the COVID-19 pandemic and the extent to which their recovery plans can promote resilience and sustainability in the long term.

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Iceland is a Nordic island small state in the North Atlantic Ocean, with a population of 368,010 as of October 27 2020, and a land area of 103,000 km², making it the most sparsely populated country in Europe.¹

COVID-19 data and timeline

February 28 - First case detected

March 16 - First ban of gatherings and public events over 100 people announced, high schools and universities closed and elementary schools remained open with restrictions

April 24 - Everyone arriving in Iceland must quarantine for 14 days from arrival

May 25 - Easing of restrictions on gatherings and school operations

June 15 - Passengers arriving in Iceland can take a COVID-19 test instead of having to quarantine for 14 days

March 12, 2021: - Confirmed cases 6,070 (or 1.65% of the total population)

Fatalities 29 (or 0,0078% of the total population)

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Iceland²

¹Statistics Iceland. (2020). Information retrieved from Statistics Iceland website [Hagstofa Islands]: <https://hagstofa.is/utgafur/frettasafn/mannfoldi/mannfoldinn-a-3-arsfjordingi-2020/>

² Source <https://capturetheatlas.com/map-of-iceland/>

COVID-19 in Iceland: An Overview

In the wake of news from the World Health Organization (WHO) about a novel coronavirus in China the Icelandic authorities declared an “uncertainty alert level” regarding the coronavirus acknowledging that it could arrive in Iceland. A month later on February 28 the first COVID-19 infected person in Iceland was diagnosed, a traveller returning home from Northern Italy.³ Within a week, the number of cases had climbed to 47. Iceland declared Northern Italy and Tyrol as high risk areas and all travellers coming from there were obliged to be in quarantine for 14 days.⁴ In fact, Icelandic health authorities warned Tyrol in Austria about the spread of COVID-19 infections in the Austrian ski resort village Ischgl when Icelanders returning back home from the resort tested positive, but the warning fell on deaf ears. The area later became a COVID-19 hotspot with 6,000 tourists getting infected and spreading the infection further in their home countries.⁵ Iceland was one of the first countries to start identifying high risk countries in returning travellers.⁶

The Icelandic government and the Directorate of Health had fortuitously enacted a national pandemic preparedness plan at the beginning of January 2020, almost two months before the first case of COVID-19 was detected in Iceland. It was decided from the beginning that Iceland would adopt the strategies of isolation, quarantine and contact tracing. As part of that plan, the microbiology laboratory at the National University Hospital of Iceland began testing citizens in

³ Fyrsta tilfelli kórónuveiru greinist á Íslandi. (2020, February 28), *Morgunblaðið*. Retrieved from:

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⁵ Þrastardóttir, R. 2020. October. 10. Hafi hunsað viðvaranir íslenskra yfirvalda. *Mbl.is*. Retrieved from:

https://www.mbl.is/frettir/erlent/2020/10/10/hafi_hunsad_vidvaranir_islenskra_yfirvalda/

⁶ Covid.is. n.d. Information retrieved from the website Covid.is: <https://www.covid.is/sub-categories/iceland-s-response>

early February. However, it soon became clear that the hospital lacked the capacity to test as needed. On March 13, deCODE genetics, a biopharmaceutical company based in Reykjavík, began screening the general public in cooperation with the Directorate of Health and was able to quickly take over a large part of the testing.⁷

The Icelandic government announced a ban of gatherings and public events with more than a 100 people on March 16, with high schools and universities closing while elementary schools remained open with certain restrictions.⁸ Within a week the ban on gatherings was changed to 20 people and recreational facilities and other services that could not ensure a two-metre distance between individuals were closed. The Icelandic government did not resort to a full national lockdown but did respond to the pandemic with effective information disclosure to the public with daily press meetings, detailed instructions about social distancing, extensive testing, quarantine at home for people exposed and isolation for infected persons. Only 20 days after the first confirmed case in Iceland, 9,189 individuals (2.5% of the total population) had been tested.⁹ The small size of the country did play a part in the feasibility of these actions as Alma Möller, the Director of Health put it “What’s good about Iceland is our small size, and how easy it is to reach people. It might also be good to be a small nation, as it can make the health care system more extensive and exact.”¹⁰

⁷ Scuddehari, M. 2020, November 25. How Iceland hammered COVID with science. *Nature*. Retrieved from:

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⁸ Government of Iceland. (2020). *Takmarkanir á samkomu og skólalaldi til að hægja á útbreiðslu Covid-19*. Retrieved from:

<https://www.stjornarradid.is/efst-a-baugi/frettir/stok-fretti/2020/03/13/Takmarkanir-a-samkomu-og-skolalaldi-til-ad-haegja-a-utbreidslu-Covid-19/>

⁹ Invest Iceland. N.d. Iceland’s response to COVID -19. Retrieved from: <https://www.invest.is/press--media/news/invest/icelands-response-to-covid-19/312>

¹⁰ Fontaine, A.S. 2020, April 3. Not Letting Panic Guide Us: Chief Medical Officer Alma Möller on How Iceland Is Dealing with COVID - 19. *Reykjavík Grapevine*. Retrieved from: <https://grapevine.is/mag/feature/2020/04/03/chief-medical-officer-alma-moller/>

In contrast to some of its neighbouring countries Iceland did not close its borders. At the beginning of the pandemic Icelandic residents arriving from high risk areas were subject to a 14-day quarantine and as of April 24 everyone coming to the country was subjected to the same rule. The rules on the borders were revised in June when travellers arriving in Iceland were given the opportunity to be tested for COVID-19 rather than be quarantined for 14 days. After a period of rather slack controls regarding travellers arriving in Iceland, infections started to rise again in August, leading to stricter regulations with travellers needing to undergo two tests for COVID-19 with a five day interval quarantine or decline testing and quarantine for 14 days.¹¹

Key Economic and Societal Effects of the COVID-19 Outbreak in Iceland

In addition to public health outcomes, the social and economic costs of a global pandemic are high. Iceland's economy depends heavily on tourism and other export sectors and COVID-19 has therefore had a tremendous adverse effect on the economy. With rising uncertainties and travel restrictions in the wake of the pandemic, unemployment in Iceland jumped to over 10% in just two months.¹² The economic outlook deteriorated rapidly after the severity and spread of the epidemic became clear. In February, the Icelandic Central Bank forecasted that the GDP would grow by 0.8% in 2020; in August that same year, the bank's economic forecast had changed drastically, assuming instead a contraction of over 7%, mainly due

¹¹ Covid.is. n.d. Information retrieved from the website Covid.is <https://www.covid.is/undirflokkar/vidbrogd-a-islandi>

¹² Iceland Chamber of Commerce. 2020. The Iceland Economy, 2020. Retrieved from: https://www.government.is/library/09-Embassies/New-York-Consulate/ICEEcon2020-210920-Web_Final.pdf

¹³ Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs. 2020. Efnahagsleg áhrif farsóttar og sóttvarna. Retrieved from: <https://www.stjornarradid.is/library/02-Rit--skyrslur-og-skrar/Efnahagsleg%20c3%a1hrif%20fars%20c3%b3ttar%20og%20s%20c3%b3ttvarna%20-%201.%20sk%20c3%bdrsla%20starfsh%20c3%b3ps.pdf>

to a contraction in private consumption and tourism.¹³

The tourism industry in Iceland has been severely affected by COVID-19 travel restrictions. The industry had been booming in Iceland for the last decade with visitor numbers rising from 459,000 in 2010 to more than 2.3 million in 2018. This has resulted in the tourism industry accounting for 8.6% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and 39 percent of the countries' total export revenue. A large part of the Icelandic workforce works in the tourism industry and in 2017 it represented almost 16% of the workforce.¹⁴

Because of travel restrictions the tourism industry in Iceland had to resort to minimum operations with minimum staff. Even prior to the outbreak, wage increases and the strength of the Icelandic krona, were forcing many tourism companies in Iceland to downsize. Taking on more debt during the pandemic made them more vulnerable. Even so, according to the Icelandic Travel Industry Association, the coronavirus crisis has led to fewer bankruptcies than industry insiders feared, mainly because of the government's counter measures and the companies' immeasurable work on streamlining their services and agreements.¹⁵ The Government of Iceland announced a 1.6bn USD response package to the COVID-19 crisis on March 21, 2020. It included state-backed bridging loans for companies, deferral of tax payments, financial support for the tourism sector and up to 75% of salaries paid as part-time unemployment benefits. The government also initiated a campaign encouraging Icelanders to travel domestically to support the tourism industry, both with a marketing initiative and fiscally.¹⁶

¹⁴ OECD Tourism Trends and Policies. 2020. Iceland Tourism in the Economy. Retrieved from: <https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/sites/2fde1a1d-en/index.html?itemId=/content/component/2fde1a1d-en>

¹⁵ "Árið 2020 var hroðalegt, erfitt og krafðist úthalds" 2020, December 30. RÚV. Retrieved from: <https://www.ruv.is/frett/2020/12/30/arid-2020-var-hrodalegt-erfitt-og-kraftdist-uthalds>

¹⁶ Iceland Invest. N.d. *Economic and stimulus response to COVID-19*. Retrieved from: <https://www.invest.is/press-media/news/invest/economic-and-stimulus-response-to-covid-19/313>

A crisis of this magnitude has a way of revealing the underlying dynamics of governance, highlighting the strengths and weaknesses of institutions and creating a perfect opportunity for governments to re-evaluate their policies regarding resilience and sustainability. For Iceland it is important to draw lessons in the aftermath of this crisis to be able to move forward with rebuilding society. Katrín Jakobsdóttir, Iceland's Prime Minister, has emphasised the importance of focusing on equality during and after COVID-19 and that now, more than ever, it is important to fight against populism and divisive forces.²³ The Prime Minister has also focused on creating a platform to discuss how we can use the changes and challenges that COVID-19 has brought to seek sustainable and green solutions emphasizing the importance of strengthening equality and social justice in society, to defend social and civil rights that often get ignored in times of economic crisis.²⁴ The Minister for the Environment and Natural Resources, Guðmundur Ingi Guðbrandsson, has also pointed out that we should rely on experts when it comes to responses to climate change and environmental challenges, in the same way we have done while tackling COVID-19. Stating that “The COVID-19 pandemic has shown us that we are able to react quickly to threats and we should also react quickly to environmental threats”.²⁵

Another recovery measure that the government has implemented to create job opportunities and economic growth is promoting and supporting innovation and research with the end goal of building industries that are based on innova-

tion and ingenuity for the future.²⁶ The government therefore has been focusing on many of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in their recovery plans for the future after COVID-19. Even though they do not reference the SDG's directly they are setting the focus on innovation, climate action and equality in their recovery plans.

Useful Sources

- The Directorate of Health and The Department of Civil Protection and Emergency Management in Iceland COVID-19 information webpage: <https://www.covid.is/english>
- The Government of Iceland's webpage – Economic responses to COVID-19: <https://www.government.is/government/covid-19/>
- The University of Iceland's webpage on COVID-19: <https://covid.hi.is/english/>
- COVID-19 national resilience cohort: <https://lidanicovid.is/about/>

²³ Nordic Editor. 2020, September 22. *Forsætisráðherra: jafnrétti verði í fyrirrúmi í endurreisn eftir COVID-19*. Retrieved from: <https://unric.org/is/forsaetisradherra-jafnretti-verdi-i-fyrirrumi-i-endurreisn-ef-tir-covid-19/>

²⁴ Prime Ministers Office. 2020, September 27. *Alþjóðlegt, rafrænt málþing um heiminn eftir COVID-19*. Retrieved from: https://www.stjornarradid.is/efst-a-baugi/frettir/stok-frett/2020/09/27/Althjodlegt-rafraent-malthing-um-heiminn-ef-tir-COVID-19/?fbclid=IwAR1asYHJauY4p64mr-A7XSgG6nDvQ9_9a7nN7R7ieuhHn90PvncwJ_t-g4p0

²⁵The Ministry for Environment and Natural Resources. 2020, September 14. *OECD hvetur ríki til grænnar endurreisnar efnahagslífs*. Retrieved from: <https://www.stjornarradid.is/efst-a-baugi/frettir/stok-frett/2020/09/14/OECD-hvetur-riki-til-graennar-endurreisnar-efnahagslifis/>

²⁶ „Sækj-um fram með ný-sköp-un að leiðarljósi“. 2020, April, 21. *Mbl.is*. Retrieved from: https://www.mbl.is/frettir/innlent/2020/04/21/saekjum_fram_med_nyskopun_ad_leidarljosi/

COVID-19 Island Insights Series

No. 23, May 2021

Azores

Carlos Eduardo Pacheco Amaral

The COVID-19 Island Insights Series is an initiative spearheaded by the Strathclyde Centre for Environmental Law & Governance (SCELG) and the Institute of Island Studies (IIS) at the University of Prince Edward Island in collaboration with Island Innovation. The initiative brings together critical assessments of how specific islands around the world have performed during the COVID-19 pandemic and the extent to which their recovery plans can promote resilience and sustainability in the long term.

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The **Azores** is an archipelago located in the middle of the North Atlantic and has been an autonomous region of Portugal since 1975.

Population 242,823

Land Size: 2,321 km² / Maritime
Size: 984.300 Km²

Carlos Eduardo Pacheco Amaral

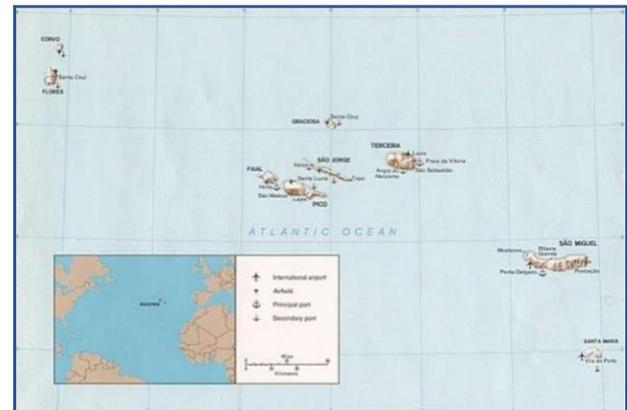
Associate Professor at the Social and Human Sciences Faculty of the University of the Azores. He holds the Jean Monnet Chair in the Azorean academy.

COVID-19 data and timeline (as of April 13, 2021)

Number of cases: 4,498 (1.85% of the population)

Number of fatalities: 30 (0.012% of the population)

Schools closed on March 16th 2020; reopened on September 15th, closed again on January 8th 2021, and reopened in a staged return on January 29th.



Azores¹

¹ Source <https://www.magical-azores-islands.com/azores-map.html>

COVID-19 on the Azores

Although there had not yet been any confirmed cases, on March 13th, 2020, the Regional Government of the Azores declared a contingency situation (similar to a state of emergency, which put all sectors of civil protection on standby) and drew up a range of measures to ensure that if new cases were detected on the islands, there wouldn't be a fast spread of the virus. These measures resulted in mandatory quarantine upon arrival in the region², and the presentation of a request to the national Portuguese Government to suspend all flights to the archipelago, as well as the adoption of extraordinary measures aimed at providing social protection for workers and their families.

The first case of Covid-19 was registered in the region on March 15th on the island of Terceira. Following the appearance of other new cases, the Regional Government closed the public administration services, having its employees work from home³, closed all educational establishments⁴ and day-care facilities⁵, limited all air and sea connections between the islands, closed all gardens, natural monuments, environmental and interpretation centres and public

visitation spaces⁶, closed bars and clubs, cinemas, gymnasiums, and banned access to public swimming pools⁷. In parallel, the government implemented a series of measures aimed at providing economic support to those most affected by the pandemic.

Since November 2020, there has been a different approach to slow the pandemic in the Azores. The Regional Government has used the method of identifying each municipality according to the risk it represents, taking into account the active cases in each area. Thus, the degrees of risk are very low, low, medium, medium high and high. Currently, the municipalities of Nordeste and Vila Franca do Campo are at High Risk and the remaining municipalities on São Miguel Island are at Medium Risk.

2 *Resolução do Conselho do Governo n.º 65/2020 de 19 de março de 2020 (azores.gov.pt)*

3 *Resolução do Conselho do Governo n.º 64/2020 de 19 de março de 2020 (azores.gov.pt)*

4 *Resolução do Conselho do Governo n.º 62/2020 de 16 de março de 2020 (azores.gov.pt)*

5 *Resolução do Conselho do Governo n.º 62/2020 de 16 de março de 2020 (azores.gov.pt)*

6 <https://jo.azores.gov.pt/#/ato/b5e2c4c3-0da5-4fde-9eaa-fc8cb314f81e>

7 <https://jo.azores.gov.pt/#/ato/b5e2c4c3-0da5-4fde-9eaa-fc8cb314f81e>

Socioeconomic impacts of the COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic has profoundly affected the economy of the Azores, an Outermost Region of the European Union, restricting economic activity and the mobility of people and leading to important challenges that are made worse by geography and distance, both between the islands (a range of 630 km. separates the most distant islands) and between the islands and the neighbouring continents (i.e., 760 km from Europe and 3,900 from North America).

Comparing some economic activity indicators from the first three quarters of 2020 with the same period in 2019, it is apparent that the COVID-19 pandemic has affected the entire Azorean society. Sectors such as tourism, as well as agriculture and fisheries, all fundamental to the Azorean economy, stand out as the most seriously affected by the pandemic.

Tourism, a sector of growing economic importance in the archipelago and responsible for almost 7% of the Gross Value Added (GVA) generated by the region, was deeply affected by the pandemic, with a decrease of 71% in the number of guests and 73% in the number of overnight stays, as well as a decrease of more than 76% in tourism revenue. The number of tourists arriving to the archipelago on cruise ships also suffered a significant drop, with 86% fewer passengers handled, with the consequent economic impact on the islands that were to receive those cruise ships.

Even though transportation is an essential component for the movement of residents and visitors, air transport saw a 63% decrease in passenger landings on all types of flights. Even maritime transport of goods suffered the effects of the pandemic, with a 14% decrease in the volume of goods entering the region's ports and a 7% decrease in exports by sea.

Agriculture and livestock farming remains one of the main economic sectors in the Azores and, as an Outermost region of the EU, the challenges are increased by the geography and the distance between the islands and the European mainland, a situation exacerbated by the pandemic. In line with what has been proposed by the European

Union (EU), particularly at the level of the Common Agricultural Policy, the Region has concentrated its efforts in diversifying, producing crops in a more environmentally friendly way, with increased concern for animal welfare, and investing in value-added markets. These goals have been called into question in a short span of time. The standard of living and consumption changed drastically in a matter of days, dramatically affecting the activity of industries and the income of producers. The impact on the Azorean dairy industries is rather significant. With the pandemic, some products such as traditional cheeses (like the well-known "São Jorge" as well as those produced by other dairies), no longer had a market, because of their dependence on sales to tourists and a decrease in exports.

Fisheries have also been affected, as revenues dropped by almost 14% and catches decreased by 5%. Regarding fresh fish exports, the volume of fish exported either by sea or by air corresponds to about 70% of the fish traded at auction between the years 2017-2019, and in 2020 this percentage decreased by about 65%. The Regional Executive is determined to move forward in all areas and fisheries is not to be left out, with the possibility of projecting during 2021 extraordinary aid and the extension of aid packages that have already been provided. Some aid may be updated and revised within the financial framework available through the regional budget and EU funds, and specifically through the Recovery and Resilience Programme.

Regarding the education sector, the 2020/2021 school year began on September 15th, and as of this day (April 13th, 2021) all schools are closed on the islands of São Miguel and students are taking online classes. As for the other islands that have a low risk of transmission, schools have remained open for face-to-face learning. Contrary to what happened at the beginning of the pandemic, when schools completely closed with only a few positive cases, the Azores education system is now faced with a multiplicity of scenarios. In some cases schools are completely closed; in other situations, where there are a few confirmed COVID-19 cases, there are online classes with teachers teaching from the school. In still other places, teachers are teaching from home while the students are at school.

Finally, there are situations where, in the same class, some students are learning at home online while others in the same class are at school. This plurality of options imposes chaos and, at the very least, a confusing array of distance learning situations for students, teachers, and the education system as a whole.

In the manufacturing sector, there was a decrease in production and energy, which was reflected in the slowdown in economic activity. Another major indicator is the 13% decrease in energy consumption by the commerce and services sector, reflecting the reduced activity of numerous establishments. The economic and employment strategy of the Azorean government has been clear and objective. First, the Government created conditions for Azorean companies to enjoy significantly more support than companies were provided elsewhere in Portugal. Second, it ensured that all regional support was complementary to national support to maximize the availability of resources to Azorean companies. Finally, it directed all regional measures to encourage and foster the maintenance of employment. To this end, the government provided financial support to all companies that have had a significant reduction in their activity to retain all their employees without any dismissals. These measures are under an Immediate Liquidity Support program, providing

non-refundable grants for companies that maintained the level of employment until 31 December, 2020, where 75% of the amount was already received and could be increased by another 10% if the companies maintained the jobs until 30 June 2021. The other measure was prolonging the Supplementary Regional Allowance for lay-offs under the Labour Code, InvesteEmprego and the Turism-Form. This measure includes an extraordinary top-up in the amount of one regional minimum wage per worker covered, which will be paid in one lump sum.

New applications were also accepted for the React-Emprego program, providing the regional minimum wage monthly to unemployed persons who were not receiving benefits, and to unemployed persons with benefits who will receive a monthly amount of EUR 190. Finally,

there was the Support Programme to Restaurants and Hotels for the Purchase of Azorean Products bearing the Azores Brand seal. This measure reinforces the co-participation rates provided for in this support programme, increasing from 20% to 25%, for the purchase of Azorean products with the Marca Açores seal. The maximum annual financial support per establishment was also increased from €5,000 to €7,500.

Post Covid-19 recovery in the Azores

On the one hand The Agenda for the Social and Economic Recovery of the Azores aims to revive the economy of the Azores and, on the

other hand, to build a more resilient region. The instruments made available to member states and European regions to overcome this crisis, namely the Recovery and Resilience Instrument, will guide the strategic choices made over the next four years. The attempt to create a more resilient, cohesive and sustainable Azores is based on the following principles:

- Reinforcement of the investment in education and upgrading of qualifications of the people, namely in initial and advanced digital skills, as well as in better financial, digital and health literacy, contributing to a more equitable, inclusive and participatory Azorean society and economy, thus reinforcing democracy and autonomy;
- Adding value to Azorean products and services, either through research and development, innovation and experimentation in the traditional economic sectors, or through the creation of new locally-based products and services, These would occur as a result of investment in the green, blue and circular economies, and would be based on a culture of collaboration and co-production, linking empirical and scientific knowledge to the Azorean business fabric and contributing to a greater social, economic and environmental sustainability of the Region;
- Promotion of the Azores as a "living laboratory", making the most of regional endogenous resources (e.g., renewable/clean energy), combined with promoting new and emerging technologies. The objective is to foster the incubation of national, European

and international innovative projects, attracting highly qualified young people, investors and entrepreneurs to the region;

- Continued Investment on the Regional Health Service, combined with the preservation and enhancement of the Azores as a Sustainable Tourism Destination with the objective of re-launching an Azorean tourism sector. This is intended to attract new segments of the tourism market, including those seeking safe destinations, accessibility to health care, contact with nature, and experiences of environmental citizenship.

Although the Azorean government has not explicitly addressed the Sustainable Development Goals in their planning documents, based on these principles they have done so in spirit and intent. For example, The Azores Destination⁹ is strongly associated with practices of sustainable development, the result of an ongoing strategy that has been carrying out effective environmental, social and economic policies and practices, so that the identity, ecosystems and quality of Azorean life can be preserved.

Within the scope of this process, a coordinating entity titled Destiny Azores was developed, with a statement on the sustainable vision of the Region, and an exhaustive survey of data requested by EarthCheck, which allowed it to carry out a comparative assessment of the sustainability performance across environmental, cultural, social and economic dimensions. Projects "towards sustainability" have also been developed through environmental education actions, for energy efficiency, for reducing waste, for recycling, but also a recognition of the ongoing importance of tourism in the economic development of the Region, as well as the creation of a Primer for Sustainability and Green Teams in all the islands.



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ISLAND



COVID-19 Island Insights Series

No. 22, May 2021

Canary Islands

Carmen Rubio Armendáriz

The COVID-19 Island Insights Series is an initiative spearheaded by the Strathclyde Centre for Environmental Law & Governance (SCELG) and the Institute of Island Studies (IIS) at the University of Prince Edward Island in collaboration with Island Innovation. The initiative brings together critical assessments of how specific islands around the world have performed during the COVID-19 pandemic and the extent to which their recovery plans can promote resilience and sustainability in the long term.

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The Canary Islands, also known informally as the Canaries, is a Spanish archipelago in the Atlantic Ocean. The archipelago is economically and politically European, and is part of the European Union. The Canary Islands are the southernmost region of Spain, and the largest and most populous archipelago of Macaronesia. At their closest point to the African mainland, they are 100 kilometers west of Morocco.

In 2019, the Canary Islands had a population of 2,153,389 (with a density of 287.4 inhabitants per km²), making it the eighth most populous autonomous community (region) among the 17 autonomous communities (regions) in Spain. The population is mostly concentrated in the two capital islands with 43% on the island of Tenerife and 40% on the island of Gran Canaria.

COVID-19 data and timeline

(as of April 5, 2021)¹:

Positive cases: 47,723 (2.2% of the population)

Positives cases per islands:

20,147 Tenerife
19,788 Gran Canaria
4,676 Lanzarote
2,105 Fuerteventura
481 La Palma
300 El Hierro
225 La Gomera

First case in the Canaries: 31 January 2020

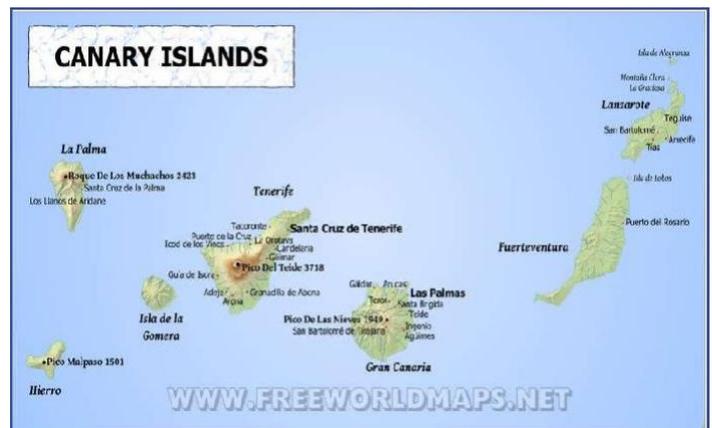
Number of Fatalities: 682 (0.032% of population)

Number PCR Tested: 974,673 with a 5.3% positive rate

Total number of people fully vaccinated as of March 31, 2021: 105,256 (7.8% of population)

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Canary Islands

¹ COVID-19 Canarias. https://www.gobiernodecanarias.org/principal/coronavirus/acceso_datos.html

The geo-strategic position of the Canary Islands makes the archipelago a tri-continental region. The Canary Islands are part of the fifth largest economy in the European Union (EU) through Spain and are fully integrated into the EU. Tourism is vital for the economy of the Canary Islands, contributing approximately 40% of employment and 35% of the islands' Gross Domestic Product (GDP). The Canary Islands takes pride in their leadership in this sector, which entails great responsibility and opportunity. The Canary Islands have developed a comprehensive touristic system/structure that serves tourists from the moment they arrive on the islands until they return to their countries of origin.

COVID-19 on the Canary Islands: An overview

The virus was first confirmed to have spread to Spain on 31 January 2020, when a German tourist tested positive for SARS-CoV-2 on La Gomera island. A few weeks later, the closure of a hotel in the south of Tenerife was required to deal with the outbreak of this virus. The management of this outbreak was later portrayed as a national example of successful public health intervention and the archipelago demonstrated itself to be a safe destination capable of making the decisions necessary to prevent the spread of the virus.

Since then, multiple national and regional measures have been implemented. Noteworthy is the nationwide state of alarm (13-27 March) for 15 days, the lifting of some restrictions (13 April - 1 May), the reimposition of a second state of emergency (1 October - present) and travel restrictions that have contributed to a feeling of remoteness and isolation among the local population.

Not all islands have been equally affected. The islands with the smallest populations, such as La Gomera and El Hierro, have remained very isolated and cases have been very rare. For this reason, the Government of the Canary Islands has had to personalize and adapt the COVID

management measures for each individual island. For this reason, some islands have suffered harsher restrictions than others.

Currently, vaccinations have become the most challenging objective. As of March 31st, 2021, 105,256 Canarians had received a full two-dose vaccination, representing just over 7.8% of the target population. This percentage is considered relatively low by European standards and there is a risk that the islands may not reach the 70% immunization target set by Europe for July.

COVID-19 containment measures and socioeconomic impacts

Since the start of the pandemic, the Government of the Canary Islands has been implementing measures to reduce the rate of spread of the virus, intensively monitoring and surveilling the epidemic, and strengthening public health and welfare services.

To protect public health, maintain the low COVID-19 incidence rate in the archipelago and maintain tourist and economic activity with the highest possible level of public safety, the Government of the Canary Islands passed a Decree in October, 2020 to regulate conditions for accessing tourist establishments within the Canaries. Both the regional and national Spanish governments continue to appeal to individual responsibility to achieve collective security.

The economic impact of COVID in the Canary Islands is associated with an extraordinary reduction in economic activity and employment, with a special impact on the tourism sector. The coronavirus crisis has exposed the vulnerability of our economy to a dominant industry. So far, the COVID crisis has led to the bankruptcy of 11% of Canary Islands companies, compared

to 2% of companies across Spain (Observatorio del Emprendimiento de España, 2020)².

Although it has recovered somewhat in early 2021, Canarian GDP fell by 20-24% during the last trimester 2020, compared to a decline in the Spanish GDP of 9.1% over the same period³. The greatest impacts have been observed on exports and imports of goods and services, due in both cases to the decrease in tourism and its effects on domestic demand. From a supply perspective, all economic sectors have been affected. In relative terms, the greatest impacts fall on services, followed by construction, manufacturing, and the primary sector.

The health crisis caused by COVID-19 has led to a radical and unexpected alteration in the entire Canarian productive system, with a special impact on the tourism sector. Restrictions on the movement of people, the closure of tourist establishments and uncertainties about the recovery of tourist demand have made the tourism sector experience the greatest intensity of economic devastation (Simancas et al., 2020).

The impact of the COVID crisis in the Canary Islands can be measured with different socio-economic indicators. While in March 2020 the unemployment rate was estimated to be 8.7%, in December 2020 it reached 29.4%, in January 2021 it was 32% and in February it climbed to 36.4%. The number of businesses operating decreased almost 35% between January 2020 and January 2021. Air traffic decreased 90% in one year (February 2020-February 2021) and the number of tourists arriving on the islands decreased 90% between January 2020 and January 2021. The number of foreign tourists to the Canary Islands plummeted from 16.8 million in 2019 to 4.8 million last year, a 71% drop. In the first six months of 2020, the number of British visitors to the archipelago fell 88% - from 2.5

² Rosa M. Batista-Canino, Alicia Bolívar-Cruz, Alicia Correa Rodríguez, Desiderio J. García-Almeida, Pino Medina-Brito, Juan L. Navarro-Mesa; Lidia Santana-Hernández, Silvia Sosa-Cabrera, Domingo Verano-Tacoronte. 2020. Situación del emprendimiento en Canarias ante la crisis del COVID-19 Análisis y recomendaciones. <https://empleo-sayempleo.ulpgc.es/wp-content/uploads/documentos/Emprendimiento-en-Canarias-y-Covid19.pdf>

million in 2019 to just under 309,000. Even though the “zero tourism” experience has been an unprecedented situation, the sector is showing its capacity for resilience. Finally, the number of new registered cars decreased 36.4% between February 2020 and February 2021⁴.

There were also many social impacts brought about by the pandemic, including on health services for the elderly and education. During the first few months, the Canarian population was passionate in their support for their health professionals, often applauding them from their balconies every night at 8:00 p.m. The lack of personal protection equipment (PPE) and the lack of masks in the early stages made health care work dangerous for these professionals. Although these supplies are now more available, access to COVID vaccines remains uncertain.

Education has also been impacted. Students engaged in virtual learning from March 2020 to the end of the 2019-2020 academic year. Educators suspect that the pandemic will have a long-lasting academic impact among the youngest, although the impact on the skills and abilities obtained will have to be evaluated, monitored and compared to those expected. However, since September some degree of normality has returned to the classrooms of primary and secondary schools, reducing the pressure on families and working parents.

University education has also returned to normal on the two largest islands, Tenerife and Gran Canarias, and in their two public universities and private higher education centers. Online learning within the university system has been effective and the teaching objectives were reached, although there has been an impact on the interactions between the universities and in-

³ <http://www.gobiernodecanarias.org/istac/.content/noticias/contabilidad-trimestral-canarias-noticia.html>

⁴ COVID-19 Canarias. https://www.gobiernodecanarias.org/principal/coronavirus/acceso_datos.html Cuadro de mando de indicadores de impacto de la COVID-19 en la coyuntura socioeconómica de Canarias. <http://www.gobiernodecanarias.org/istac/impacto-covid-19/cuadro-de-mando.html#data>

dustry, especially in professional academic programs. Due to the restrictions, some students have not been able to develop their internships in companies to the same extent as they did prior to the pandemic.

Post Covid-19 recovery: Resilience and sustainability

In October 2019, the Regional Parliament defined the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that needed to be achieved in the archipelago, and identified the actors, methods and means necessary to implement them⁵. The regional government then developed a series of concrete actions to be taken. Presented as a new model of governance, the Agenda 2030 of the Canary Islands is, according to its promoters, a real “social, co-operative and sustainable” regional development strategy. The pandemic presents both an enormous challenge and tremendous opportunity for reaching the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The SDGs are a roadmap for humanity and the challenges to be faced cannot be dealt with in isolation.

The Canary Islands Government, in this particularly fragile pandemic context, is under unparalleled pressure to deliver digital services and social protection, deal with immigration from West Africa, and function in ways that advance social cohesion. The Canaries people, health care professionals, and government leaders face the challenge of rethinking multiple aspects of our lives. The health crisis caused by COVID-19 has shone a magnifying glass on the economy and society, highlighting its deficiencies and weaknesses. People are tired and exhausted. The airlines have closed many of their routes and the number of flights offered has decreased. The Canary Islands population feels

less connected, both within the archipelago and with the mainland.

There is a high degree of uncertainty about the future, including the employment prospects of our young people. The recovery has been very slow and new and innovative ways of thinking are required. Long-term care services and facilities for elders must be rethought. Increased levels of teleworking are likely here to stay, turning houses into offices. Companies located on the mainland that previously shipped their products to the Canaries are thinking of opening branch plants on the islands and Canarians are increasingly able to access previously unavailable products online. E-commerce now constitutes 6% of the GDP after growing 25% in 2020. Canarian companies are betting on the internationalization of their products (ICEX, 2020)⁶.

Health security measures are going to become an important aspect of tourist protocols, making destinations that comply with them more attractive. The Canary Islands government has drawn up a roadmap to guarantee maximum health security for visitors, tourist sector workers, and the rest of the residents, conditions. The “Canarias Fortaleza Plan” and the “Laboratory of Tourism Protocols” have been launched by the Canary Islands Government to guarantee health security at each of the steps of the tourism value chain (Canarias FORTALEZA, 2020)⁷. The government is committed to marketing the Canary Islands as a “safe destination”. For their part, tourism entrepreneurs are highlighting the resilience of tourism on the archipelagic territory and have been studying opportunities for sustainable tourism development.

Tourism currently provides one out of every eleven jobs in the world. In the Canary Islands, it represents over one-third of the Gross Domestic Product. In addition, in Tenerife, the hospitality and service sectors contribute more than

⁵ Guía para la localización de los ODS. La perspectiva del Parlamento de Canarias. <https://www.local2030.org/library/659/Gua-de-localizacin-de-los-ODS-Parlamento-de-Canarias-PNUD.pdf>

⁶ Reference ICEX, 2020. <https://www.canarias7.es/economia/facturacion-comercio-electronico-20210307023253-ntvo.html>

⁷ Canarias Fortaleza, 2020 https://turismodeislascanarias.com/sites/default/files/canarias_fortaleza_dmt_2020.pdf

60% of the GDP to the island's economy. Being part of the Smart Tourist Destination Network means being a well-established innovative destination with cutting-edge technological infrastructure that ensures the sustainable development of the tourist region is accessible to all, facilitates visitors' interactions and integration with the surroundings, and enhances the quality of both visitors' experiences and the lives of local residents. This is intended to turn the Canary Islands Smart Islands into an innovative tourist destination based on an ICT infrastructure that ensures the quality of life of its citizens and makes the area accommodating, habitable, accessible, and sustainable.

Rural tourism is playing an increasing role. The COVID-19 crisis that has paralyzed traditional mass tourism to the Canary Islands will, paradoxically, favour the growth of a new business segment consisting of traveling professionals or what has been referred to as "digital nomads", which the Government expects to grow by twice the number previously predicted. Canarias is being redesigned and reinvented as a destination for some mobile workers who can come here to work remotely all year round. Thanks to a marketing strategy aimed at promoting itself as "the office with the best climate in the world", the archipelago aspires to attract 30,000 remote workers and digital nomads within a one-year period. With an initial budget of 500,000 euros, this project will seek to position the Canary Islands internationally among the main centers of activity of these remote professionals in the world, from London or Budapest to California (USA), using targeted promotional campaigns and publicizing their progress. Ads and reports in traditional media, paid and free, publications on social networks and organization or sponsorship of events that attract the attention of this type of tourist, who does not usually respond to the stimuli of the campaigns used in travel agencies and other common supports, are part of the marketing strategy⁸.

⁸ <https://workintenerife.intechtenerife.es/blog-en/smart-island-innovation-that-ensures-sustainable-development/>.

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ISLAND



COVID-19 Island Insights Series

No. 15, March 2021

Newfoundland and Labrador

Bojan Fürst and Meghan Eibner

The COVID-19 Island Insights Series is an initiative spearheaded by the Strathclyde Centre for Environmental Law & Governance (SCELG) and the Institute of Island Studies (IIS) at the University of Prince Edward Island in collaboration with Island Innovation. The initiative brings together critical assessments of how specific islands around the world have performed during the COVID-19 pandemic and the extent to which their recovery plans can promote resilience and sustainability in the long term.

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Newfoundland and Labrador is the eastern-most province of Canada and has a total population of just over 520,000 people.

The province is made up of an island portion (Newfoundland) and a mainland portion (Labrador).

The island of Newfoundland is the 16th largest island in the world with a population of 494,085 people.

Approximately 276,000 people live on the Avalon Peninsula with St. John's metropolitan area accounting for 212,433 people.

There are another dozen or so permanently inhabited islands in the archipelago of over 7,000 islands surrounding the main island of Newfoundland.

Labrador has a landmass of 294,330 km² and population of approximately 27,000 people, many of whom are Indigenous Innu or Inuit¹.

COVID-19 data and timeline

(as on 8th March 2021)

Number of cases on the island: 997
(0.20% of population)

Number of fatalities: 6 (0.0012%)

Schools closed on March 16 and reopened September 9, closed again February 10 and remain closed as of the writing of this paper (March 8, 2021)

Travel restrictions introduced on April 23, 2020 and are still in place.

Number tested: 115,478 (23.37%)

Number vaccinated (at least one dose): 24,757 (4.7%)

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Newfoundland and Labrador²

¹ Newfoundland & Labrador Statistics Agency, Department of Finance https://stats.gov.nl.ca/Statistics/Topics/population/PDF/Population_Estimates_CDCMA.pdf

² [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Newfoundland_\(island\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Newfoundland_(island))

COVID-19 on Newfoundland and Labrador

The year 2020 promised to be a memorable and difficult one for Newfoundland and Labrador from the start. In early January, a record snowfall accompanied by 130 km/h winds buried much of the Avalon Peninsula³. Given the power outages and massive snow clearing effort needed, the City of St. John's and affected communities declared a State of Emergency and requested military assistance in dealing with the record snowfall. That weather event, affectionately nicknamed "Snowmageddon", was followed by a series of storms and snowfalls. The City of St. John's and much of Newfoundland and Labrador were still buried in snow when the first case of COVID-19 was reported in the province on March 14.

Initial public health measures were introduced days after the first case, progressively getting stricter with the entire public school system migrating to online instructions on March 16 and the university closing on March 18. Most retailing closed on March 23 as did all visitations to long term care facilities in order to protect the residents. On April 23, the government introduced mandatory 14-day self-isolation periods for all travelers coming into NL.

Mandatory masks in indoor spaces, 2 metre social distancing, and limits on numbers of people allowed in enclosed spaces were all part of the initial response. Entry to the province and island was restricted to four groups: residents of the province and those living on the nearby French islands of St. Pierre and Miquelon requiring medical care, essential workers, and case-by-case exemptions approved by the Chief Medical Officer of Health. International travelers with Newfoundland and Labrador as their final des-

tinuation, even if they met Canada Border Service Agency requirements, were not guaranteed entry into the province⁴.

The interprovincial ferry network also made changes requiring people travelling on ferries to remain in their vehicles during crossings. Starting on March 25, the number of ferry crossings was reduced, the number of passengers restricted to half capacity and the ferry travel limited to essential workers, patients travelling for medical reasons, those travelling to purchase essential goods and supplies that are not available in their home community, and those transporting essential goods⁵. Some of those restrictions were lifted on May 8⁶. In consultations with affected communities, the ferry schedules were revised on July 1 to accommodate increased traffic over the summer months. This coincided with the creation of the Atlantic Bubble which, from July 3, allowed residents of the four Eastern Canadian provinces (Newfoundland and Labrador, Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia, and New Brunswick) to travel within the bubble without the mandatory 14-day self-isolation upon arriving at their destination. On August 27, restrictions were eased for property owners residing outside of the Atlantic Bubble with properties in the province. They were allowed to enter the province with appropriate exemption with mandatory 14-day self-isolation⁷.

The Canadian Civil Liberties Association challenged the travel restrictions on non-residents on the grounds that they violated Section 6 of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms guaranteeing Canadians' right to move freely across the country. The Supreme Court of Newfoundland and Labrador upheld the travel ban in its September decision⁸.

With a growing number of cases in some Atlantic Canadian provinces, the provincial government withdrew from the Atlantic Bubble on December 7 while remaining open to rejoining

³ <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/jan/19/snowmageddon-cleanup-begins-after-record-newfoundland-storm>

⁴ <https://www.gov.nl.ca/covid-19/individuals-and-households/travel-advice-2/#travelform>

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⁶ <https://www.gov.nl.ca/releases/2020/tw/0508n03/>

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⁸ <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/newfoundland-labrador/nl-travel-ban-supreme-court-decision-1.5727549>

should the spread be contained. In February of 2021, an outbreak of the UK variant on the Avalon Peninsula (the most populous region of the island) connected to a large high school and associated sports teams sent the province back into a strict lockdown. By March 13, the lockdown measures were relaxed for the Avalon Peninsula from Level 5 to Level 4 and the rest of the province was put on Level 3. Schools up to Grade 9 are scheduled to re-open on March 17 while the high schools will continue to deliver their curriculum on-line.

COVID-19 Relief Measures - Federal

The national and provincial governments implemented a range of relief measures during the pandemic. The federal government offered programs directed at individuals, businesses, industry sectors, organizations helping Canadians, and provinces and territories with additional benefits directed specifically towards Canada's Indigenous peoples and communities⁹.

Programs for individuals included temporary changes to Employment Insurance (EI) program plus three new programs, Canada Recovery Caregiving Benefit, Canada Recovery Sickness Benefit, and Canada Recovery Benefit. Across the programs for the individuals the federal government paid a total of \$81.64 billion CAD in support payments and processed 27.56 million individual applications with 121,270 coming from Newfoundland and Labrador as of September 28, 2020¹⁰. There were additional programs for Indigenous peoples on both the individual level and the business level.

Business supports focused on helping businesses maintain and rehire employees, waiving tariffs on medical goods, and providing a range of financial supports in the form of loans and access to credit¹¹. The Federal Government also

created a range of sectoral supports (e.g., agriculture, fisheries, culture, tourism, energy, infrastructure, and mining) with a focus on wage subsidies and access to credit¹². Programs developed to support provinces and territories focused on wage subsidies and supporting critical health care needs. Significantly, the federal government had a Newfoundland and Labrador specific program providing \$320 million to NL's offshore oil and gas workers designed to maintain jobs "through activities such as safety improvements, maintenance and upgrades of existing facilities, and research and development"¹³.

COVID-19 and the Newfoundland & Labrador Economy

The economic context of Newfoundland and Labrador was difficult even before the pandemic. The drop in oil prices drastically reduced government revenues at a time when the province was grappling with a multi-billion-dollar debt largely as the result of an ill-advised and poorly managed hydroelectric project in Labrador known as the Muskrat Falls project. Dam construction and transmission infrastructure costs ballooned from an initially projected \$7.4 billion to \$12.7 billion CAD. The Commission of Inquiry Respecting the Muskrat Falls Project tabled its extensive report on March 5, 2020, just before the first provincial case of COVID-19 was identified¹⁴.

With finances stretched to the limit with a \$23 billion Cdn. public sector debt in 2019, the offshore oil and gas sector already in turmoil, and the pandemic effectively shutting down the tourism and hospitality and retail sectors, the provincial government released a delayed budget in September 2020 projecting a \$1.84 billion deficit. The budget earmarked \$30 million in

⁹ <https://www.canada.ca/en/department-finance/economic-response-plan.html>

¹⁰ <https://www.canada.ca/en/services/benefits/ei/claims-report.html>

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¹³ <https://www.canada.ca/en/department-finance/economic-response-plan.html>

¹⁴ <https://www.gov.nl.ca/iet/muskrat-falls-a-misguided-project/>

COVID-19 relief for small businesses and community organizations, \$1 million to support artists and musicians, and \$1 million for craft breweries with additional funding available to other sectors.

COVID-19 Impacts on Newfoundland and Labrador

Newfoundland and Labrador has always been dependent on natural resources extraction and export. In the past, the fishing industry was key. Today, provincial government revenues are largely dependent on oil and gas and mineral extraction sectors. There is growing reliance on tourism, especially in smaller, rural communities.

Tourism and the hospitality sector, as well as the retail sector, appear to have experienced the most acute impacts of COVID-19. Tourism and hospitality accounts for 1.7 percent of GDP and 7.5 percent of employment while the retail sector counts for 5.1 percent of GDP and 13.2 percent of employment¹⁵. Both of those sectors were effectively closed for most of 2020. The available tourism data on international and domestic travelers indicate an 81 percent drop in international travelers and 95 percent drop in domestic travelers between November 2019 and November 2020¹⁶. In addition, claiming COVID-19 impacts as the cause, national airlines have canceled international and interprovincial flights from St. John's, making international and Canadian travel significantly more difficult¹⁷. Permanent closures of those flights will likely have a significant long-term impact on tourism, making the post-COVID-19 recovery much more difficult for the sector.

While there is only limited data on impacts of COVID-19 on the economy at this time, anecdotal evidence suggests that rural parts of the island were hit harder economically than urban

regions. With the oil and gas sector shedding jobs and tourism in rural parts of the province coming to a standstill, there are indications that some of the 277 incorporated municipalities in the province may not be able to maintain their municipal status. Business closures in rural and urban areas have been evident, but again, only limited data is available at this time. Currently available data show that 43 percent of business in the province have laid off at least one person during the pandemic. As many as 32 percent of small businesses employing one to four people laid off at least one person and over 50 percent of medium sized and large businesses laid off at least one person during the pandemic¹⁸.

Post Covid-19 recovery on Newfoundland and Labrador

The provincial government has established two task forces. The Task Force on Health Care is looking at reforming health care delivery in the province with a focus on social determinants of health¹⁹. Health care remains the largest government expenditure in the province.

More problematic, and lacking in transparency, is the Premier's Economic Recovery Team led by Dame Moya Greene²⁰. That task force has as its mandate review of fiscal capacity, government expenditures, service delivery, and growth opportunities. There is an expectation that the task force, whose final report is not binding, will recommend drastic cuts to rural services, especially ferry services to the remaining permanently settled small islands as well as cuts to public service. The task force final report was slated for release after the February 13 provincial election raising additional concerns about the government plans for post-COVID-19 recovery at a time of declining oil and gas revenues and a needed transition to a green economy. Less than three weeks before the election, none of the major political parties

¹⁵ <https://www.gov.nl.ca/budget/2020/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2020/09/The-Economy-2020.pdf>

¹⁶ Source: Stats Can, Table 24-10-0041-02

¹⁷ <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/newfoundland-labrador/air-canada-three-flights-cut-1.5870725>

¹⁸ Source: Stats Can, Table 33-10-0279-01

¹⁹ <https://healthaccordnl.ca>

²⁰ <https://www.gov.nl.ca/releases/2020/exec/1022n02/>

in the province had released a detailed recovery plan or an election platform charting the course out of the province's current fiscally and economically unsustainable position. To make the situation worse, the February outbreak of the UK variant of the virus has necessitated a switch to remote voting via mail-in ballots and several extensions to the voting timelines which at this point may constitute a legal and constitutional quagmire. At the time of the writing of this paper (March 8), the election results are still not known and the election process is not finished. Coincidentally, the release of the Premier's Economic Recovery Team report has also been delayed.

On the bright side, a range of non-governmental organizations and institutions are developing strategies and programs exploring a post-oil future for the province and moving the discussion towards a net-zero economy and a more sustainable approach to regional economic and social development in the province (see the Resources section of this document). Prompted by the lack of transparency, election uncertainty, and obvious need to focus on the prosperity and economic recovery, a group of academics and citizens released a People's Recovery document as an answer to the Government's commission report outlining a range of financial and economic measures.

The pandemic also demonstrated that for many workers remote work is possible. This may be an opportunity for rural regions on the island to attract some urban residents from within the province as well as attract those who have left the island looking for employment on the mainland. While there is no reliable data yet, there is some anecdotal evidence that with the COVID-19 layoffs and larger exposure to infection in urban areas, some workers are moving back to the island and the rural regions. However, the numbers may not be significant or permanent. The lack of reliable broadband internet access in rural and remote regions continues to be a major impediment to such opportunities. There is a recognition that post-COVID-19 recovery is an opportunity to create a new direction for the economic development in the province. The

mining sector remains a strong and growing industry. Similarly, aquaculture and a nascent agriculture sector also hold considerable potential. Growth in a technology sector, especially ocean technology, continues to be a strong driver of innovation in the province. The Sustainable Development Goals are not used as a framework within the province, with the exception of university researchers engaged in development work in other jurisdictions. Much of the development language focuses on green economy, net-zero economy and various use of term "sustainable," even when referring to obviously non-renewable sectors such as oil and gas.

Despite the fiscally and economically difficult situation the province is in, exacerbated by the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, it is important to acknowledge that provincial public health measures and good compliance with those measures have spared the province an enormous cost in lives that other parts of Canada and the world are experiencing.

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COVID-19 Island Insights Series

No. 16, March 2021

Prince Edward Island

James Randall, Laurie Brinklow and Marlene Chapman

The COVID-19 Island Insights Series is an initiative spearheaded by the Strathclyde Centre for Environmental Law & Governance (SCELG) and the Institute of Island Studies (IIS) at the University of Prince Edward Island in collaboration with Island Innovation. The initiative brings together critical assessments of how specific islands around the world have performed during the COVID-19 pandemic and the extent to which their recovery plans can promote resilience and sustainability in the long term.

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Prince Edward Island (PEI) is the smallest of the 13 provinces and territories of Canada¹ and is the only one completely surrounded by water.

The Island is 5,620 km² (2,170 mi²) in size, making it the 104th largest island in the world².

The population (158,717 as of April 1, 2020) has been growing steadily over the past decade and in recent years has consistently surpassed the growth rate of other provinces in the country³. Most of this growth is as a result of international immigration.

COVID-19 data and timeline

(as of March 2021)

Number of cases 136⁴ [0.086% of the population]

Number of fatalities 0 [0% of the population]

Schools closed on March 17, 2020, and reopened September 8. Online learning was provided by public schools from April 5 to June 26, 2020⁵. There have been two "circuit breaker" periods recently that have closed schools for short periods of time.⁶

Travel restrictions which began on March 13 remain in effect to date with some easing from July to November, 2020. With a resurgence in cases elsewhere in Atlantic Canada, travel and quarantine restrictions were reimposed for those travelling from all other jurisdictions

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COVID-19 on Prince Edward Island

“We will get through this pandemic *the Island way* – by taking the necessary precautions, by working together and by looking out for one another.” - Premier Dennis King (Government of Prince Edward Island, April 2, 2020)⁸

As of March 02, 2021, Prince Edward Island (PEI) had reported 136 cases of COVID-19. There have been no hospitalizations or deaths and no outbreaks in long-term care facilities for seniors. In March, the federal government of Canada banned all non-essential, international travel, including between Canada and the USA, and required all international travellers to self-isolate or quarantine upon arrival at their destination⁹. These orders remain in place¹⁰. In Canada, provinces have authority over health care and education. This means that as a subnational island jurisdiction (SNIJ), the PEI provincial government was able to make almost all decisions in regard to the island’s public health response to the global pandemic. A public state of emergency was declared on March 16, 2020, giving the public health officer authority over all public activity including health care, education, the economy and social behaviour¹¹. The restrictions on funerals were particularly challenging on an island with strong social networks, where paying respects at funerals and wakes is an important part of social life. Beginning March 21, 2020, anyone arriving on PEI from out of the province was also required to follow self-isolation guidelines, and enhanced screening measures were put in place at all main points of entry (i.e., Confederation Bridge, Charlottetown Airport and two ferries). By April 1, only those travelling for essential reasons (i.e., essential work, compassionate reasons) were allowed to enter the island¹². The combination of the timing of the travel restrictions prior to Spring school

holidays, closing of borders and a high level of compliance by the island population are likely key factors in what can thus far be considered a successful response. The strong sense of place and the perceived external threat of the virus intensified an ‘islanders versus outsiders’ mentality among some that resulted in public reporting of those breaking the public health rules¹³.

A four-phase plan for returning social and economic life on PEI was rolled out from May 1 through June 26. The island remained in phase four until a ‘circuit breaker’ was implemented December 18 after the first instance of suspected community spread of the virus in PEI¹⁴. A second temporary lockdown has just taken place (March 02, 2021) in response to several cases that could not be linked to travel¹⁵. Being a largely rural, cold-water island, the population is accustomed to the notion of isolation, a low population density and a slower pace of life. In the early days of restrictions, some islanders even expressed that they were looking forward to having ‘the island to ourselves’. At the same time, the main economic drivers of agriculture, fish processing and summer tourism meant that 21st-century island life and the island economy was linked closely to what was taking place in the rest of the world.

Key sectoral pressures in Prince Edward Island during COVID-19

As a SNIJ, the island was flooded with announcements from both the federal and the provincial governments of the numerous support programs available to islanders. By mid-June the provincial programs alone were estimated to total \$200 million CAD in commitments¹⁶. PEI’s Premier lobbied the federal government

⁸ Italics added.

⁹ Retrieved on September 21 from <https://www.cbc.ca/news/business/canada-u-s-border-travel-restrictions-covid-19-1.5689249>

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¹³ Retrieved September 9 from <https://www.princeedwardisland.ca/en/news>

¹⁴ <https://www.facebook.com/govpe/>

¹⁵ <https://www.princeedwardisland.ca/en/covid19>

¹⁶ Retrieved September 21 from <https://www.princeedwardisland.ca/en/information/finance/budget-address-2020>

for modifications to its COVID support programs to ensure that they captured the ‘special’ needs of islanders dependent on seasonal employment, including the federally regulated fishery.

Although PEI has historically been highly dependent on transfer payments from the federal government, the province entered the pandemic in a relatively strong fiscal, demographic and employment position¹⁷. This was a change from the long-held perception of the island as a quaint and pastoral tourist destination, but also a relative economic backwater, to a jurisdiction viewed as being vibrant, creative and innovative. Early action by the provincial government and a focus on economic stability speaks to an understanding of the connectedness and vulnerability of the island to external shocks. It also speaks to a sense of social and economic resilience; that as an island community “we can and we will overcome” this challenge as we have overcome them in the past - the Island way, by working together and focusing on one another¹⁸.

In 2019 PEI’s tourism industry had set records for tourist visitations (1.6 million) and revenues (\$505 million CAD), with cruise ship traffic up 29.5%¹⁹. Despite these records, the island’s economy had been diversifying from a reliance on primary industries, tourism and public administration to one that is now experiencing significant growth in biotechnology, IT and the aerospace sectors²⁰.

While the provincial government’s response to COVID may not have always been framed as relief for the tourism industry, much of it was indirectly linked to this sector. For example, in June, seasonal residents (many of whom had

island relatives and owned summer homes on PEI) were allowed to return provided they self-isolated for 14 days upon their arrival. They were monitored daily and, where appropriate, tested for the virus²¹. Although this move was met with some opposition, it was defended as allowing “home” those who were really islanders in spirit. By July, an Atlantic bubble, consisting of neighbouring jurisdictions with similar restrictions and successes in controlling the virus (i.e., PEI, Nova Scotia, Newfoundland & Labrador, and New Brunswick) was created, allowing residents from these provinces to travel throughout the region without self-isolating for 14 days. Within the first three days of the announcement of this policy, 5,200 applications for travel to PEI were received and the Premier himself greeted the first visitors at the Confederation Bridge²². Given the exponential growth of cases in neighbouring provinces and the presence of newer, more infectious variants, this bubble ‘burst’ in late 2020 and has not yet reopened.

Passenger air travel to PEI was reduced to one flight by one airline (Air Canada, Charlottetown to Montreal) late in 2020 after passenger travel declined 96% between April and November²³. While the full economic impact in the tourism sector has not yet been calculated for 2020, total visitation and accommodations indicators are down by about sixty percent year over year²⁴. This sector and others indirectly linked to tourism have undoubtedly been adversely affected by the pandemic. However, despite the impacts on these sectors, much of the manufacturing, farming, fishing, construction and public administration continued, and early projections are that the relative financial impact on PEI may not be as severe as elsewhere in Canada. Net domestic immigration is up, as are

¹⁷ Retrieved September 23 from <https://www.princeedwardisland.ca/en/information/finance/gross-domestic-product-gdp-income-and-expenditure>

¹⁸ Retrieved September 23 from <https://www.princeedwardisland.ca/en/information/finance/budget-address-2020>

¹⁹ Retrieved September 9 from <https://www.princeedwardisland.ca/en/news/another-record-breaking-year-visitation-and-tourism-revenues>

²⁰ Retrieved September 16 from <https://www.princeedwardisland.ca/en/information/finance/gross-domestic-product-gdp-industry>

²¹ Retrieved September 16 from <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/prince-edward-island/pei-seasonal-residents-arrive-testing-1.5588308>

²² Retrieved September 16 from <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/prince-edward-island/pei-atlantic-bubble-opens-1.5636175>

²³ <https://www.theguardian.pe.ca/business/local-business/air-canada-temporarily-cancelling-flights-between-charlottetown-and-toronto-528895/>

²⁴ <https://www.princeedwardisland.ca/en/publication/monthly-tourism-indicators-0>

housing prices²⁵. Further, the unemployment rate in PEI is only 0.3% greater in January 2021 than one year earlier²⁶. The current projection is for a \$172.7 million CAD deficit in 2020-21, but this does not include the \$200 million in pandemic support already committed to be received from the federal government as of June 2020²⁷. The response to date suggests that federal and provincial governments will continue supporting those sectors most in need.

Post COVID-19 recovery - A different approach

PEI has taken a staged and controlled approach to reopening the island's society and economy and this appears to be minimizing the spread of the virus, keeping most businesses solvent and making most islanders feel safe and confident to participate in everyday activities while still following public health directives. PEI is a strong example of leveraging its island characteristics - bounded, connected, tight-knit - to minimize the virus and shelter its economic and social way-of-life. Given the small number of cases and no hospitalizations, images of viral waves may seem out of place on PEI. However, given the clusters of cases emerging in surrounding jurisdictions, the government and general population have remained vigilant and cautious. The few small outbreaks make everyone realize that the situation can change drastically on short notice.

This staged effort to build capacity for restarting the economy began by defining hundreds of seasonal foreign workers, needed in the fish and farm processing sectors, as essential work-

ers. They were supported and monitored for viral infections²⁸. Subsequently, allowing for the return of seasonal residents, and then visitors from Atlantic bubble jurisdictions, were the next elements of this cautious, staged approach to reopening. In the summer of 2020, the capital city of Charlottetown successfully hosted a national professional soccer tournament with security surveillance and testing²⁹. Essentially, this was a smaller version of the bubble approach taken by several of the professional North American sports leagues. As each of these stages of reopening passed without an outbreak, the island's leaders encouraged islanders to be kind and welcoming while maintaining all COVID-19 precautions. It is possible that the government's communications narrative of "working together", "looking out for one another" and the "Island way" may have fuelled existing tensions to view those 'from away' with suspicion, to say nothing of bolstering a false account of an island that is or could be self-sufficient. However, it seems as though the more aggressive approach, including the required and enforced 14-day self-isolation for all non-essential visitors including international and Canadian students, has so far been effective from a public health perspective and, at least partially, from an economic recovery perspective.

Post COVID-19 recovery and the Sustainable Development Goals

On Prince Edward Island, sustainability language has been used primarily in relation to initiatives related to the natural environment and action on climate change³⁰. More recently, the term "sustainable communities" has been used

²⁵ <https://www.apec-econ.ca/publications/view/?do-load=1&publication.id=407>

²⁶ <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tb11/en/tv.action?pid=1410028703>

²⁷ Retrieved September 23 from <https://www.princeedwardisland.ca/en/information/finance/budget-address-2020>

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³⁰ Retrieved September 21 from <https://www.canada.ca/en/environment-climate-change/corporate/transparency/briefing/prince-edward-island-environment-profile.html>

in provincial government priorities. Despite being aligned with them, none of these initiatives appear to be tied explicitly to the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). When the provincial government tabled its 2020-21 budget in the legislature it framed the global pandemic as a catalyst for awareness and action on priorities such as climate change and noted that the unforeseen downturn was an opportunity to “reset”, to “reimagine our future” and, in particular, to be “sustainability leaders”³¹.

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COVID-19 Island Insights Series

No. 5. November 2020

Shetland

Andrew Jennings

The COVID-19 Island Insights Series is an initiative spearheaded by the Strathclyde Centre for Environmental Law & Governance (SCELG) and the Institute of Island Studies (IIS) at the University of Prince Edward Island in collaboration with Island Innovation. The initiative brings together critical assessments of how specific islands around the world have performed during the COVID-19 pandemic and the extent to which their recovery plans can promote resilience and sustainability in the long term.

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Shetland is an archipelago lying to the north of the Scottish mainland

Population 22,920¹

Size 1,466 km²

Shetland Islands Council is a unitary authority originally established as a body corporate by Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 and now constituted under Section 2 of the Local Government etc. (Scotland) Act 1994. The Council provides the full range of local government services to the people of Shetland, Britain's most northerly local authority area.²

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COVID-19 date and timeline

Numbers of cases 73 [0.3% of the population]

Number of fatalities 8 [0.03%]

Schools closed on 9th March 2020;

Travel restrictions enacted on 22nd March with ferries only for essential travel

29th March flights only for essential travel

Travel restrictions lifted on 15th July

Schools reopened in a staged return 11th - 14th August

New 5 Tier system for Scotland introduced on 2nd November Shetland in Tier 1



SHETLAND³

¹ Data obtained from Wikipedia

² Additional information is provided on the Council's website at <http://www.shetland.gov.uk>

³ Map downloaded from https://it.wikipedia.org/wiki/Isole_Shetland#/media/File:Shetland_Islands_in_Scotland.svg

COVID-19 on the Shetland Islands

Restrictions in Shetland were imposed by the Scottish Government in Edinburgh, given Shetland's reality as a Scottish local authority. Shetland Islands Council delivers services but is not a law-making authority. Laws are made by the Scottish Parliament in Edinburgh and the Westminster Parliament in London. The national health service, education and transport in Scotland are the responsibility of the Scottish Parliament. Borders are controlled by Westminster. Covid-19 affected Shetland early in the pandemic with 7 deaths by May 6th (60% in care homes). There has been 1 additional death. Altogether, as of 19th November, 73 people have tested positive. Shetland has only had one hospital without ICU facilities. In the early stage of the pandemic two people had to be flown to Aberdeen. Those requiring only hospitalisation were housed in the local hospital wards which were specially adapted to provide the requisite facilities. Local volunteers sewed scrubs for the staff early on, when there was a supply shortage. Testing could be done from the start but has expanded. Initially most tests were flown to Glasgow for processing at the Lighthouse Laboratory. An offer from the Faroe Islands to help with testing was not taken up, because it was deemed that the procedure did not fit UK specifications. However, one processing machine was acquired for the hospital to be used only for frontline staff and emergencies. By the end of October, during which 1400 plus tests were carried out, nearly 500 were done in the local laboratory. Local contact tracing has been successful with 90% of contacts traced. Throughout Scotland schools closed on 20th March. However, Shetland had closed its schools a week earlier, claiming operational reasons i.e. not enough staff. This is the only example of Shetland going its own way.

Schools reopened on the 11th August. Shetland experienced the same restrictions, and relaxing thereof, as the rest of Scotland. For example, on 20th March all cafes, pubs and restaurants closed and on 23rd March everyone had to stay at home, with only one form of exercise being

allowed each day and shopping for basic necessities. These restrictions were progressively relaxed. For example, by 19th September although social distancing had to be respected and masks had to be worn people could frequent pubs, restaurants and shops. Groups could not exceed 6 from 2 families indoors and outdoors. However, the number did not to include children under 12. There were complaints that large groups of young people were meeting at weekends at night in the centre of the main town Lerwick and social distancing was not being maintained at all. Clearly there was an element of fatigue with the restrictions. Because of a second wave of cases in Scotland a new 5 Tier System was introduced on the 2nd November. Shetlanders hoped to be in Tier 0, which would have meant no restrictions. However, Shetland, along with Orkney, the Western Isles, Highland and Moray councils, were all placed in Tier 1. Islanders, unlike those on the mainland, were from 13th November allowed to visit each other's houses, but only six people from two households at a time.

Key socioeconomic pressures in the Shetland Islands during COVID-19

Essentially all major social events were cancelled, such as the large international festival Wool Week, an increasingly important event in Shetland's calendar, and Shetland's Up Helly Aa fire festivals. However, Lerwick's Up Helly Aa, Shetland's biggest festival was enjoyed before the pandemic. However, next year's Lerwick Up Helly Aa has been cancelled, which is a huge decision for Shetland.

Tourism

This is an important industry, but small in per capita terms compared with other islands. The pandemic lockdown meant that the boats and aircraft to the mainland were reduced to almost nothing, and they were only for islanders with essential needs. This did have a dramatic impact on hotel accommodation providers, who were already under stress. Tourism was

opened up in July but, because of social distancing, capacity on the boats and aircraft is still restricted. Inter-island ferries still need to be booked. This continues to impact the outer islands where tourism is a bigger part of the economy. Interestingly, the self-catering industry has shown some resilience, with local visitors taking up some of the slack, having weekend breaks in different parts of the islands. With an expectation of 105 ships and 90,000 visitors, it is clear that businesses that relied on the cruise ship customers have been severely affected.

Retail

Local food providers, supplying dairy, vegetables, meat and fish have actually been very busy. Supply lines with the mainland were maintained, although there was some wholesale difficulty initially and some staffing problems. However, postal and courier deliveries have never been busier. In May, Lerwick topped the list of UK postal delivery hotspots. Local essential shops throughout the islands have flourished because of home deliveries, which have continued throughout the pandemic. The value of local retail services to the community has been acknowledged and is much appreciated.

Fishing

Shetland's fishing industry took a serious early hit, which was very worrying as it is worth about a third of the Shetland economy, at about £300 million annually⁴. International markets for farmed Atlantic salmon, mussels and shellfish disappeared overnight. However, the Scottish Government provided financial support, offering £5 million in March to Scotland's inshore fishermen, including Shetland, and a further £2 million equivalent in June. Recent data for salmon exports show a fall of 33% for Scotland as a whole in the first six months of 2020, and Shetland makes up a large proportion of the Scottish total. However, once markets reopened salmon exports have rebounded. Similarly, although

whitefish landings continued, in May landings were down by 40%. As France and Italy opened up, the industry recovered so that by June catches had returned to last year's average.

UK Job Retention Schemes

As part of Scotland and the UK, the UK job retention scheme, known as furloughing, applied in Shetland as well. The furlough payment is 80% of an employee's wage up to the value of £2500. At 25% uptake this was one of the lowest in the UK, the Scottish average being 32%. However, £2.1 million has been claimed, which meant 3100 claimants receiving money from the program. There has also been a doubling in the claimant count for job seekers and universal credit from May to July, which indicates unemployment. However, this started from a low level, going from 3.7% to 6.5%. This perhaps gives a false impression of economic health, because if you lose a job in Shetland you tend to leave the islands. Six hundred locals also received grants under the self-employment support scheme, constituting an uptake of 69%, the second lowest level in Scotland. It should be noted that the public sector is large in Shetland, so many jobs were protected and home working increased significantly⁵.

Housing Market

Interestingly, in the housing market there has been no decrease in price. House surveyors are busy, and the online site Rightmove⁶ saw a large increase in interest from people looking at houses in Shetland. This seems to be a phenomenon throughout the Scottish islands, which are seen by many as safe havens.

Major Industrial Projects Delayed

A number of large industrial projects were delayed including the huge Viking Energy windfarm, which at 370MW capacity is one of Europe's biggest onshore windfarms, and the

⁴ <https://www.shetland.org/about/economy>

⁵ Thanks to Thomas Coutts Project Manager, Economic Development, Shetland Islands Council for these data and

providing me with a clear overview of the Covid-19 impact on the Shetland economy.

⁶ <https://www.rightmove.co.uk/>

600MW Interconnector project, which will allow for the transmission of the electricity generated in Shetland to the mainland. However, work has restarted, as has the furore over environmental damage. Oil rig decommissioning, which is seen as a potentially major contribution to the Shetland economy, has also restarted. Recently the world's largest ship arrived to deposit an oil rig for decommissioning.

Post Covid-19 recovery on Shetland Islands

The year 2021 could be a difficult year for Shetland as the job retention scheme will finish. However, Shetland is in some ways a self-contained area that has its own economy, based on being an offshore extension of Scottish industry, with a large proportion of Scotland's fishing, aquaculture and oil and gas industries, and these will continue. It has a more diverse economic portfolio than many small islands, as well as some large industrial projects emerging now and in the future. These include Viking Energy, the Interconnector, the decommissioning of oil rigs, the Space Port on the island of Unst, a large urban development project in Lerwick (i.e., the Knab), and the Shetland Energy Hub, which might produce five percent of the UK's low carbon energy by 2050. These should maintain the Shetland economy into the future. These developments are the focus of Shetland Council's Recovery and Renewal Framework which was approved on 2nd July. The Framework also highlighted the detrimental impact of the virus on the physical, mental and social wellbeing of Shetlanders and as the community moves into the recovery and renewal phase it must work hard to keep the virus under control. However, post-COVID there is a potentially

larger uncertainty on the horizon, and that's Brexit. A no-deal scenario could be a real problem for an export economy like Shetland's. Finally, in an interesting development, Shetland Islands Council is now discussing autonomy. Undoubtedly, this is in part due to the COVID-19 situation but also with an eye to the future of Shetland's economy.

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South Atlantic Ocean

Sub-National Island Jurisdictions

Fernando de Noronha

St Helena

Tierra del Fuego (Argentina)

Tierra del Fuego (Chile)

A wide-angle landscape photograph of St Helena, showing a rugged, reddish-brown coastline with sparse vegetation. The sea is a deep blue-green, and a small white boat is visible on the horizon under a cloudy sky.

St Helena

A scenic view of a tropical beach on Fernando de Noronha. The beach is sandy and curves along the edge of clear, turquoise water. Lush green trees frame the scene, and a small blue boat is anchored in the bay.

Fernando de Noronha

A photograph of a coastal town in Tierra del Fuego, Argentina. The buildings are multi-story and colorful, built on a hillside overlooking the sea. In the background, snow-capped mountains rise under a dramatic, cloudy sky.

Tierra del Fuego (Argentina)

A photograph of several fishing boats, including a prominent yellow one, on a beach in Tierra del Fuego, Chile. A vibrant rainbow arches across the sky above the boats. The scene is set against a backdrop of a calm sea and distant hills.

Tierra del Fuego (Chile)



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COVID-19 Island Insights Series

No. 21, May 2021

Fernando de Noronha

Daniel Hauer Queiroz Telles and Marcio Sommer Bittencourt

The COVID-19 Island Insights Series is an initiative spearheaded by the Strathclyde Centre for Environmental Law & Governance (SCELG) and the Institute of Island Studies (IIS) at the University of Prince Edward Island in collaboration with Island Innovation. The initiative brings together critical assessments of how specific islands around the world have performed during the COVID-19 pandemic and the extent to which their recovery plans can promote resilience and sustainability in the long term.

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Fernando de Noronha – An Overview

Fernando de Noronha's *islandness* is evident both in its physical geography as well as in its cultural and political characteristics. The archipelago has an estimated population of 3,101 inhabitants². This remote volcanic archipelago consisting of 21 islands is recognized as a World Heritage site³. Although it can be reached by air and sea, its remote location still restricts accessibility.

The archipelago has a unique, complex and hybrid governance structure in relation to the Brazilian federal pattern. Historically, its principal functions were designated by its geographical location. Different European nations landed on the island throughout the early centuries of colonization until Portugal gained control by populating it and building military fortifications in the mid-18th Century. Since then, it has served as a prison and was used by the military during the Second World War and the Cold War⁴. Since 1970, under strict conservation policies and regulations, tourism has become increasingly important.

The Fernando de Noronha archipelago is a state sub-district⁵, expected to become a municipality in the future. It is democratically fragile, due to the multiple and overlapping layers of governance and the unpopular selection of the main territorial administrator by the state government of Pernambuco. This latter position is commonly held by a representative who does not live, nor is directly connected to the island. On the other hand, there are examples of participatory management, such as the Territorial Autarchy of the State District of Fernando de

Noronha (ATDEFN), environmental committees and a seven-member District Board whose main function is to oversee the general administrative activities. Unfortunately, this Board is perceived by the local population to be powerless, "for not providing elementary public services, such as effective health care, education, waste treatment and collection; and the latter for failing to put in place real action to oppose or make valid popular claims through its legal powers and duty"⁶. It is also known that urbanization on the main island took place in a disorderly manner, due to the lack of regulatory instruments for use, occupation and buildings⁷. The outcome of this process has led to environmental and health problems. Furthermore, the archipelago is dependent on fossil fuels for the generation of electricity and transportation, contradicting the principles of international biosphere heritage, its designation as a national protected area, and adversely affecting the local economy⁸.

Fernando de Noronha is a federal territory in a federal water zone and is dominated by environmental protected areas. Its administrative status officially changed to the Pernambuco's district in the late 1990s. The territorial decentralization doctrine is a constitutional principle of federal governance, but the mechanisms to achieve self-determination and effective, democratic, and sustainable goals in the archipelago have not been implemented for the past three decades. This explains the current Brazilian President's intentions, as publicly announced, to return the archipelago's administrative status to federal control⁹, under the premise that it could achieve better performance of the tourism economy. Since Pernambuco's Constitution has not yet fully reached its

² IBGE, 2021, <https://www.ibge.gov.br/cidades-e-estados/pe/fernando-de-noronha.html>.

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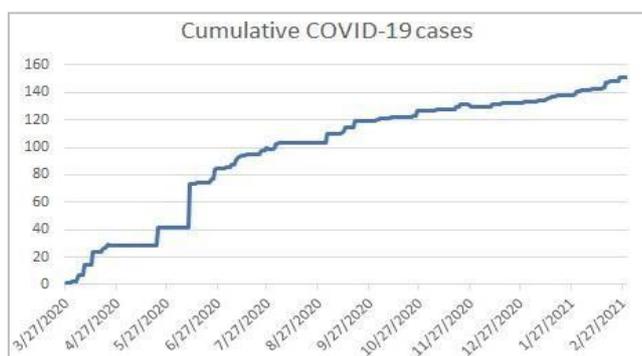
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democratic goal of decentralization, the governance process is being interrupted rhetorically by presidential pronouncements. Considering the increased importance to achieve sustainable principles and realize the 2030 Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) global agenda, the current central question for residents of the archipelago is how to face the challenges and opportunities that the COVID-19 pandemic presents, including how to reform the governance structures that reveals itself weakly democratic resulting from the current period of exceptional authoritarian management.

COVID-19 on Fernando de Noronha and control measures

In Fernando de Noronha, the first case of COVID-19 was recorded on March 27th, 2020,¹⁰ and the first death as a result of COVID-19 occurred on January 21st, 2021.¹¹



The only local inhabitant death was confirmed¹² on February 26th, 2021 following the increase of infected cases of residents during the period from January to February 2021. Of the total of 586 cases to date (March 18th, 2021), there have been 2 deaths, 556 inhabitants have recovered and 27 remain in quarantine or hospital treatment.

¹⁰ <https://noticias.uol.com.br/cotidiano/ultimas-noticias/2021/01/22/fernando-de-noronha-confirma-a-primeira-morte-por-covid-19.htm>.

¹¹ Source <https://brasil.io/dataset/covid19/boletim/>

¹² <https://g1.globo.com/pe/paranaguaba/blog/viver-noronha/post/2021/02/26/moradora-de-noronha-viaja-para->

Fernando de Noronha was closed to visitors on March 21st, 2020, and on April 5th Island residents who were on the mainland were prevented from returning. It wasn't until June 13th that they were allowed to return to their homes, first on fortnightly flights and then weekly, following a protocol established by health authorities and the State.

In order to educate the population about the public health precautions for everyday activities the archipelago administration published a manual that depicted physical distancing, basic sanitary habits, appropriate behavior in public spaces, drugstores, markets and gas stations, as well as how individuals should practice sports, fishing, and work safely. Schools started to reopen in September 2020 and continued to reopen gradually through February 2021. The use of masks and proper hand hygiene was required, students' temperatures were taken, and the distance between chairs was increased¹³.

Socioeconomic impacts

The pandemic control protocol has multiple components involving civilian and military police enforcement, health agencies, and campaigns with stakeholders. The main element is the requirement for RT-PCR exams for anyone who wishes to travel to the island, regardless of whether they are residents, workers or tourists. However, the results of the tests were often not available prior to a person arriving and circulating on the island, resulting in several positive cases for those travelers already on the island. For such patients, individual home isolation was enforced. For those already infected, presenting proof of a positive result of a prior infection was sufficient to gain entry. For such cases there is greater flexibility in the types of tests performed in addition to RT-PCR, including serology tests administered within 90 days from the date of boarding. However, due to the economic dependence on tourism, the government

[fazer-surpresa-de-aniversario-ao-filho-e-morre-de-covid-19-no-recife.ghtml](https://g1.globo.com/pe/paranaguaba/blog/viver-noronha/post/2021/02/23/alunos-da-escola-arquipelago-retomam-atividades-presenciais-em-fernando-de-noronha.ghtml).

¹³ <https://g1.globo.com/pe/paranaguaba/blog/viver-noronha/post/2021/02/23/alunos-da-escola-arquipelago-retomam-atividades-presenciais-em-fernando-de-noronha.ghtml>.

authorities of Fernando de Noronha made several attempts to reopen access to the island to visitors: first on September 1st, then again on October 2nd, and a third time on December 18th.

Although tourism is the most important economic activity in Fernando de Noronha, the way it is structured has resulted in socioeconomic inequalities between stakeholders and those earning the income. This is clearly seen among locals and foreign entrepreneurs¹⁴, and represents a common pattern for Brazilian coastal islands whose main economic activity is tourism¹⁵. Sixty-five percent of the gross domestic product (GDP) of the archipelago depends on tourism – a much greater extent than any other municipality in Brazil¹⁶. As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, the impact on the tourism sector has been quite significant. For example, the number of visitors dropped from 106,000 in 2019 to 33,836 in 2020.

In terms of state financial subsidies for the vulnerable populations, several months of emergency aid have been provided by the national government. On Fernando de Noronha, 982 citizens have received the aid to a total amount of R\$ 4.073.264,00¹⁷, partially making up for the lost tourism activity. Socially, there may have been several positive impacts as a result of the pandemic. For example, the decrease in visitations to the beaches and natural attractions has enabled their ecosystems to recover. In addition, there has been a reduction in the amount of waste generated, an increase in the amount of drinking water available to residents and a reduction in the number of non-authorized residents (i.e., Brazilians who have not received permission to move to the island)¹⁸.

Post Covid-19 recovery and the Sustainable Development Goals: A distant agenda

The COVID-19 pandemic has been a crucial test associated with the challenges and threats to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030. Prior management practices have been shown as only partially adequate for a world that seeks to achieve the principles of equality, justice and sustainability. In the Fernando de Noronha archipelago, the poor ability of public management to resolve and control social, urbanistic, environmental and economic problems has become more apparent. The permanent subordination of a non-democratic government, the dependence on energy that is primarily based on fossil fuels, and the high economic dependence on tourism that is controlled by outsiders to the territory, strengthen the hypothesis that the current tourism dependency and governance structure on the archipelago is antithetical to development based on sustainable principles.

The three attempts in the later part of 2020 to reopen the islands to tourism clearly demonstrate the pressure and power that tourism, and those who stand to gain the most from tourism revenues, exerts on the island territory. This pressure comes only partly from demand. In a region where most of the tourism enterprises belong to outside residents, and where the general administrator is also an outsider, most of the strategic decisions that affect the social and economic lives of islanders are based on what is best for external interests, not local needs.

¹⁴ Rocha & Brasileiro, 2013, <https://periodicos.unb.br/index.php/revistacenario/article/download/15204/13515/#page=74>.

¹⁵ Telles & Gandara, 2012, <https://revistas.ufpr.br/turismo/article/viewFile/22832/17717>.

¹⁶ Sakowski, 2015, http://repositorio.ipea.gov.br/bitstream/11058/3850/1/td_2073.pdf.

¹⁷ <http://www.portaldatransparencia.gov.br/beneficios/consulta?tipoBeneficio=6&ordenarPor=municipio&direcao=asc>.

¹⁸ <https://g1.globo.com/pe/pernambuco/blog/viver-noronha/post/2020/03/23/rodizio-de-abastecimento-de-agua-em-fernando-de-noronha-e-reduzido-para-combater-o-coronavirus.ghtml>.

<https://g1.globo.com/pe/pernambuco/blog/viver-noronha/post/2020/04/17/ministerio-publico-de-pe-determina-retirada-imediata-de-moradores-irregulares-em-fernando-de-noronha.ghtml>. See also:

<https://g1.globo.com/pe/pernambuco/blog/viver-noronha/post/2020/04/06/com-reducao-de-pessoas-cai-em-50percent-a-producao-de-lixo-de-fernando-de-noronha.ghtml>. And also:

<https://g1.globo.com/pe/pernambuco/blog/viver-noronha/post/2020/04/06/com-reducao-de-pessoas-cai-em-50percent-a-producao-de-lixo-de-fernando-de-noronha.ghtml>.

Fernando de Noronha started vaccinating against COVID-19 on January 20th, 2021 for elderly people over 75 years old. Immunization is being coordinated by the island's Primary Care team, which carries out the actions at home. As of March 18th, 2021, all healthcare professionals and those above the age of 75 years had been vaccinated¹⁹.

The COVID-19 pandemic has shown how the Sustainable Development Goals allow greater attention to be paid to the archipelago's sustainable future. This includes: 1) achieving SDG3 (i.e., good health and well-being) by accelerating immunization and assuring universal health coverage against known and potential epidemic threats, 2) observing that access to drinking water and essential sanitary conditions, as well as the generation of waste, inversely benefits island residents due to the decrease in tourist numbers (SDG 6), 3) reviewing the benefits of the tourism economy, considering the asymmetric dependence of this sector and the real distribution of benefits between local habitants and outsiders entrepreneurs (SDG8 and 10); and 4) by acknowledging the alarming non-democratic governance structure on the island and the threat this creates for the local community in terms of locally-based decision making and quality-of-life (i.e., SDG16 – peace, justice and strong institutions).

There is still a considerable amount of uncertainty regarding the long-term impacts of the pandemic on the archipelago. Although there may have been some early successes in ecological resilience of beaches and touristic points, communitarian behavior, and local sanitary campaigns, greater problems became evident in governance. The prospects for self-determination and endogenous development on the island are even more threatened in the face of a deficit of representative autonomy on democratic decision-making and the distribution of financial profit from the tourism sector. In addition, the institutional efforts of long term in conservation agenda are at risk associated to the

mismanagement at the government federal level simultaneously with the pandemic.

Useful Sources

- <http://www.noronha.pe.gov.br/>
- <http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1000>
- <https://covid.saude.gov.br/>
- <https://www.conass.org.br/painelconass/covid19/>
- <https://brasil.io/covid19/>

¹⁹ Pernambuco, 2021.



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COVID-19 Island Insights Series

No. 20, May 2021

St Helena

Kamar Tanyan and Nicole Shamier

The COVID-19 Island Insights Series is an initiative spearheaded by the Strathclyde Centre for Environmental Law & Governance (SCELG) and the Institute of Island Studies (IIS) at the University of Prince Edward Island in collaboration with Island Innovation. The initiative brings together critical assessments of how specific islands around the world have performed during the COVID-19 pandemic and the extent to which their recovery plans can promote resilience and sustainability in the long term.

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St Helena Island - South Atlantic
Ocean

Population of 4,527¹

Size= 121 km²

St Helena is a British Overseas Territory in the South Atlantic Ocean, one of the safest and most remote islands in the world boasting a pristine terrestrial and marine environment. St Helena island, until October 2017, was accessible only by sea, via a five day boat trip from South Africa, and is now accessible by air.

COVID-19 data and timeline

Number of community cases:0. St Helena island remains free from COVID-19 confirmed or suspected cases in the community.

Number of fatalities:0

Schools have remained open since the beginning of the pandemic.

Travel restrictions enacted on 21 March and have been constantly reviewed to limit travel. Travel restrictions were in place limiting to returning residents between Jan 2021 to March 2021. Tourists allowed to travel before Jan 2021 and after Apr 2021, but subject to 14 days quarantine and testing before entry.

Weekly flights to South Africa have been temporarily suspended. Flights to UK via Accra have been chartered, approximately every 5 weeks.

AstraZeneca vaccinations provided to over 95% of the adult population.

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Dr. Kamar Tanyan is the Senior Medical Officer of St Helena Government. She is a Public Health specialist and holder of a Master's degree in Disaster Medicine.

Nicole Shamier

Nicole Shamier is the Chief Economist of St Helena Government. She holds a Master's degree in economics.



St Helena²

¹ *St Helena Statistics, as of Jan 2021*

² Source https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Saint_Helena

An overview of St Helena: Remoteness, vulnerability and tourism

St Helena recently declared itself as a Small Island Developing State, in an attempt to increase its ability to be involved in development strategies and increase its resilience on the international stage. St Helena is known to be one of the most remote islands in the world. The airport opening in October 2017 provided a better accessibility to the island that the government turned into a strategy to support small businesses and promote tourism to the island.

St Helena is a remote island with limited resources; it hosts an ageing population with a high prevalence of non-communicable diseases and associated risk factors.

The vulnerability of the island to COVID-19 was at the center of planning of the prevention stage of the island strategy, when COVID-19 pandemic first started. Gaps in our island readiness to respond to the threat were identified and measures were quickly taken to tackle them.

As the situation was changing at a fast pace around the world, St Helena put restrictions on travel from high-risk countries (China, Hong Kong and later on Italy) to limit the risk of getting the virus to the island while building the preparedness capacity. Cruise ships were restricted from coming ashore but humanitarian support to people onboard vessels stayed unchanged. Quarantine for 14 days for all arrivals was first introduced in March 2021. Since then, the entry requirements have changed, reacting to the news from the world. The Island implements a risk-based approach to deciding its entry measures.

The community of St Helena, however, is relatively risk averse, and the Health Service has designed measures to match community sentiment.

St Helena Island preparedness plan

St Helena has one general hospital that provides primary and secondary level of healthcare, with 2 Intensive Care unit (ICU) beds and a very small healthcare team. There also is an established referral system to South Africa for medical cases at the tertiary healthcare level. Initially, there was no testing capacity on St Helena to diagnose cases and no facility to isolate or treat positive cases. The St Helena Government rapidly and timely identified the risks to the island and immediately started working on a preparedness and response Plan. An emergency crisis command system, called the Incident Emergency Group (IEG) was created, including as members the island Executive Council. A mandatory 14 day quarantine period was established for all arrivals and a pledge was made by the UK government for additional funding to respond to the threat.

There were several stages to the Plan. Preventing the virus from entering the community was the first stage, which used tests and quarantine measures (which at the time of writing is 14 days), as well as suspension of weekly flight services and a short-term suspension of tourist visitors (January 21- March 21 when cases in the UK were very high).

Between March and July 2020, two existing facilities were repurposed and commissioned to be a quarantine site and COVID-19 treatment center. The government called on the private sector and individuals to provide construction materials and a workforce, and the construction work was completed in a record time of four weeks, demonstrating a significant level of community resilience and engagement. The design and implementation of the quarantine and treatment facilities were in accordance with Public Health England and World Health Organization standards. Between July 2020 and January 2021, the 50 bed quarantine centre was the only place where arrivals from the UK could quarantine. However, as of January 2021, home quarantine was allowed for all arrivals, as long as their home passed certain tests

by a responsible officer. Arrivals from St Helena's nearest Island, Ascension, which has also been COVID-19 free, were allowed to quarantine at home from October 2020, and will not require quarantine at all from May 2021 so long as Ascension's community stays COVID-19 free.

There is also a contact tracing policy, a Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) policy, and business continuity plans drawn up to ensure quick transition to social distancing and other community measures should an outbreak occur.

The preparedness plan is outlined by:

- 1- Creation of Incident Emergency Group that included the island Executive Council and technical advisors;
- 2- an expansion of the healthcare team to improve the existing numbers and skill mix;
- 3- creating a remote medicine support from UK specialists in related fields to support local teams in their management of the new disease;
- 4- acquiring testing kits and strengthening the testing capacity of the only laboratory on island;
- 5- procuring personal protective equipment for healthcare and essential workers;
- 6- ordering an oxygen plant to equip the dedicated COVID-19 treatment facility;
- 7- creating a contact tracing cell that involved multidisciplinary team including local police;
- 8- establishing an alternative medical referral pathway to the UK;
- 9- maintaining a sustainable supply chain for food, medicine and essential items.

The AstraZeneca vaccine was provided to St Helena in 2021 and by the end of April over 95% of the adult population have had two doses of the vaccine.

COVID-19 threat to St Helena Island

Until vaccines were administered, the local community and healthcare system felt very vulnerable considering the aging population, the limited health resources and the high prevalence of chronic health conditions.

In early March, there was a suspected imported case of COVID-19 and a possible spread to another community member was considered. Contact tracing was immediately activated and a number of individuals were asked to quarantine, mainly due to an inability to test the suspected case. The St Helena Government issued a recommendation to adhere to enhanced social distancing measures and recommended some businesses close to avoid large gatherings. It is worth noting the high level of cooperation by the public and adherence to the government directives to stay at and work from home. The suspected case was found not to be a COVID-19 case. However, the exercise was positive as provided the island a practice run in how to deal with an outbreak.

Regular weekly flights from South Africa (SA) to St Helena were suspended on March 21st 2020 when South African authorities entered a level 5 national lockdown. Nationals of St Helena were stranded in SA and could not return home for several weeks. Referral of medical cases was suspended, and this suspension is still in place. Referral by air ambulance for extreme emergencies was not affected by the South African lockdown but proved to be very challenging within COVID-19 context.

Cargo, food and medical supplies from SA and the UK remained possible with some delays caused by the restrictions imposed in these countries. This highlighted again St Helena's vulnerability. However, as a mark of St Helena's resilience, it has become accustomed to having shortages, St Helena's merchants tend to buy in bulk and use warehouses to store their stock to avoid shortage situations. This has the advantage of smoothing local inflation when there are price shocks internationally.

Due to these significant limitations of the island connection with the outside world, charter flights were scheduled. This included a repatriation flight from South Africa to bring back nationals and facilitate return to the island of essential workers as well as newly recruited healthcare workers. These flights, executed in May, also brought in medical supplies and equipment. Since April 2021, tourists have once again been allowed to enter St Helena, as long as they complete the 14 day quarantine and do the necessary testing. Flights to the UK via Accra now occur every 5 weeks which allow access to and from the island.

Key socioeconomic pressures during COVID-19

The tourism sector is badly affected by global travel restrictions and quarantine rules. The government financial support to owners of holiday houses, restaurants, bars and hotels is the main buffer to such economic stress.

Most tourists who visit the island are usually from South African and European countries. The arrival numbers in the December 2020 - March 2021 peak season were badly hit. Visitors to St Helena ranged from a low of 28 in a month (off peak) to a high of 108 in a month (December peak), most of which were returning St Helenians, usually non-resident, travelling to see friends and family. This compared to 166 (off peak) 478 (peak) in the same months a year previous. A number of schemes were put in place to support the sector and workers including 'hardship support for impacted sectors'.

St Helena's economy relies heavily on aid from the UK Government. Whilst its biggest export, tourism, (worth around £5m) has suffered, St Helena was able to manage due to the approximate £30m annual aid budget from the UK Government. Its other biggest exports, coffee and fish, were not affected substantially by COVID-19. A reduction in global fuel prices, and a strong Pound compared to the Rand also allowed St Helena to keep inflation low.

Post COVID-19 recovery and the Sustainable Development Goals

St Helena is considering safe ways to return to the new normal by exploring air bridges with COVID-19-free islands and by developing new concepts of tourism bubbles within quarantine corridors. Furthermore, St Helena continues to monitor the worldwide country risk using statistics and a Red, Amber, Green and Gold country classification system with regards to prevalence. The local government follows closely evidence related to risk reduction by mitigation measures. Once the world prevalence rates start to fall, it will be necessary to review again the test and quarantine measures and change entry requirements without actually reducing the per arrival risk of transmission.

Furthermore, the UK Crown awarded the following in recognition of achievement related to COVID-19 response:

- Member of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire (MBE) to Adam Williams, Captain of the MV Helena for keeping the supply ship calling the Island, managing a crew with very little shore leave.
- British Empire Medal (BEM) to Rhys Hobbs, St Helena Government Project Manager, for leading a team to complete the quarantine facility within a time sensitive 6 weeks, with few resources to call on.

St Helena has been privileged to observe the unfolding and impact of the pandemic around the world; especially on islands; this allowed the island to evaluate approaches taken by similar societies to return to a new normality and select what is applicable to the local context.

Useful Sources

- Visit the COVID-19 resource centre at <https://www.sainthelena.gov.sh/coronavirus-covid-19/>



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COVID-19 Island Insights Series

No. 24, September 2021

Tierra de Fuego. Argentina

Peter van Aert

The COVID-19 Island Insights Series is an initiative spearheaded by the Strathclyde Centre for Environmental Law & Governance (SCELG) and the Institute of Island Studies (IIS) at the University of Prince Edward Island in collaboration with Island Innovation. The initiative brings together critical assessments of how specific islands around the world have performed during the COVID-19 pandemic and the extent to which their recovery plans can promote resilience and sustainability in the long term.

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Argentine Tierra del Fuego is an archipelago located in the extreme south of the South American continent. It forms part of the nation's youngest provinces, called Tierra del Fuego, Antártida e Islas del Atlántico Sur, constituted in 1990.

Estimated population: 173,432¹

Land size: 21,571km²

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COVID-19 data and timeline

(as of April 20, 2021)

Number of cases: 25,410 (14.7%
of the population)

Number of fatalities: 388 (0.22%
of the population)

Number of vaccines: received
30.601; applied 27.811, of which
21.153 first doses and 6659 sec-
ond doses.



Tierra de Fuego²

¹ Retrieved on April 21 from <https://ipiec.tier-radelfuego.gov.ar/>

² Source https://www.ushuaia-patagonia.com.ar/Mapas/pages/tierrafuego_jpg.htm

COVID-19 en la Isla Grande de Tierra de Fuego, Argentina

The Great Island of Tierra del Fuego (total land surface 47.992 km²) is divided into two jurisdictions along the meridian of 68° 34' West. The western portion of the island (29,485 km² or 61.43% of the island land mass) belongs to the Chilean Province of Tierra del Fuego, the eastern section (18,507 km² or 38.57%) being part of The Republic of Argentina³.

Despite being an insular community located 3,000 km south of the capital city of Buenos Aires, the first COVID-19 case was confirmed within its boundaries on March 10th, only seven days after the first case at the national level.

On the 17th of March, the governor of Tierra del Fuego announced severe measures in the light of latest COVID-19 related developments. At that time, cruise tourism was still active, producing many entrances for international tourists into the urban area of Ushuaia, the Province's capital city. With just a few confirmed cases within its jurisdiction, this issue, along with the relatively low capacity in terms of medical assistance, forced the Provincial government to implement severe measurements before the national government did so on March the 19th⁴.

All industrial, commercial, sport and leisure activities were suspended, including all tourist related events. All public establishments were closed, including all educational institutions⁵. The local population was commanded to stay at home, and tourists were asked to return to their places of origin⁶. Specific regulations allowed only one family member to be in the public space, for essential services such as food acquisition and medical assistance. All access to and from the island was closed, excepting repatriating movements from and to the island which were carried out only by air. This "preventive and obligatory social isolation" (or ASPO in

Spanish) was sustained for 80 days until the more flexible measure - "preventive and obligatory social distancing" - (or DISPO in Spanish) was announced on the 6th of June.

Cases were significantly reduced during this first period of ASPO, although with different curves in the two mayor cities. In Río Grande, the largest city on the island, the number of cases was stabilized rather quickly. However, during July, when measures had been eased for several weeks, cases increased steeply, resulting in a second period of ASPO at the local scale from July 21th to August 16th⁷. In Ushuaia, positive cases climbed to 124 at the beginning of May, and dropped rapidly reaching a 39 day stretch without any positive case until the 4th of July. With the exception of a short eight-day period of ASPO from the 27th of September in Ushuaia, both localities maintained a policy of DISPO during the spring and summer months⁸.

Just recently, from the beginning of March 2021, positive cases started to increase significantly again, reflecting national trends. Argentina has entered into a "second wave" and although a lock down has been implemented only in the metropolitan area of Buenos Aires, in Tierra del Fuego DISPO restrictions were announced. Social gatherings in private spaces were prohibited, while outside gatherings were allowed for up to twenty persons. Also, a curfew was implemented from midnight to 6:00am.

Socioeconomic impacts of COVID-19 in Tierra de Fuego

Apart from a steep decline in most commercial activities produced by ASPO and DISPO restrictions, the city of Ushuaia was particularly affected due to the suspension of tourist activities. During the winter season of 2020 businesses survived on local demand only (which is

³ Van Aert P. (2013) Tierra del Fuego. In: Baldacchino G. (eds) The Political Economy of Divided Islands. International Political Economy. Palgrave Macmillan, London.
https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137023131_11

⁴ Source: Ontivero, J. y Rodriguez M.S., 2020. Coronavirus en Tierra del Fuego. Una mirada cuantitativa. Actualizado el

30 de diciembre 2020. Retrieved on April 15 from http://untdf.edu.ar/coronavirus/covid19_en_tdf.

⁵ See Decreto Provincial 468/2020, available [here](#).

⁶ Recorded [here](#) from Gobernador Melella.

⁷ Ontivero, J. y Rodriguez M.S., Op.cit.

⁸ Ibid.

hardly significant relatively), and during the summer season of 2020-2021 cruise tourism was completely suspended, which caused a devastating setback. At the time of the first ASPO in March 2020, Ushuaia had broken its own season record related to cruise tourism. Its port registered 443 cruise related entrances, disembarking 135,153 tourists⁹. Also the National Park of Tierra del Fuego, that borders the city of Ushuaia, registered in 2019 more incoming visitors than ever before, totalling 408,974 individual entrances, of which only 11% was from local islanders¹⁰.

The city's commercial activities lean heavily on tourism, which is why employment came under severe pressure due to the pandemic. The national government implemented a series of policies at the federal level in order to compensate for the decreased revenues in the private sector¹¹, such as the Emergency Programme of Assistance to Employment and Production (or ATP in Spanish). This consists of compensation offered to companies related to the salaries of employees. According to a survey conducted by the Provincial government in August 2020, in Tierra del Fuego, half of the state emergency assistance to tourist companies stemmed from this programme¹². Among other state funds are APTur (5.1%) – that was specifically aimed at individuals offering tourist services, such as independent tourist guides – and the Provincial fund PROG.RE.SAR (11,9%) – that received a significant number of applications from tourism-related workers in Tierra del Fuego¹³. Unfortunately, some of these funds consisted of only one disbursement, as was the case with APTur, or in the 2021 wave represented a significantly lower level of support in spite of the elevated inflation rates. For instance, PROG.RE.SAR diminished disbursements from Arg\$40.000 per person in 2020, to Arg\$30.000 in 2021, despite an annual inflation rate of 36.1% in 2020¹⁴.

⁹ IN.FUE.TUR. Turismo de cruceros 2019/2020. August 2020.

¹⁰ Statistics obtained from the local office of the National Parks Administration, 2020.

¹¹ See <https://www.argentina.gob.ar/produccion/midas-pymes-covid>.

¹² IN.FUE.TUR. Resultados Relevamiento COVID-19 Sector Hotelero de Tierra del Fuego, Antártida e Islas del Atlántico Sur. In Press.

Since international tourist entries are still suspended, the year 2021 presents many more uncertainties for many families in Tierra del Fuego.

However, official statistics indicate a different tendency at the provincial level¹⁵. This can be partly explained by the significant proportion of state employees in Tierra del Fuego, and, especially, by the particular employment juncture in the city of Río Grande. In this city the electronics industry employees a significant portion of the local labour force on short term contracts (mostly for periods of 90 days). After a steep fall in employment caused by the fact that many of these contracts were not extended when factories were closed down, this trend was inverted during the second quarter of 2020. This change was at least partly a result of COVID-19 hygiene protocols that resulted in a duplication of workstations. The other motive was the compensation needed in the production of the commodities that rolled off the assembly lines in Fuegian factories. After the closure during the first ASPO, production needed to be intensified in order to meet increased demand from the national market. The use of consumer goods produced in Tierra del Fuego, such as smartphones and smart TV's, was increased rather than reduced as a result of the implementation of COVID-19 measures. This clearly benefitted industrial employment in Tierra del Fuego.

Besides the aforementioned financial aid offered from government at different levels, Tierra del Fuego also changed its public health infrastructure as a result of Covid-19. Due to the remote and cross-border conditions of the island community, at the initial announcements in 2020, the national government liberated funds in order to establish temporary sanitation centres in Tierra del Fuego's two main cities to

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ According to official publications. See https://www.indec.gob.ar/uploads/informesdeprensa/ipc_01_21CD878A2A5B.pdf.

¹⁵ For instance, see the official publication of general employment rates based on the Permanent Survey of Households (EPH in Spanish) (fourth quarter of 2020) at: <https://ipiec.tierradelfuego.gov.ar/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Tasas-4%C2%BAtrim-2020.pdf>.

increase the capacity of medical assistance. In Ushuaia, the local indoor micro-stadium was turned into a hospital ward with 63 beds equipped with respiratory technology, for low-risk yet assistance-dependent patients, and 7 intensive care units. In Río Grande, the municipal shelter was converted into a health care centre with 24 beds, four rooms with oxygen equipment and other basic medical technology. None of these centres has been fully occupied up to date, but have provided an effective “buffer zone” that prevents further spreading of the virus while recovering patients receive medical assistance without occupying hospital beds.

Additionally, the national government financed the installation of Modular Sanitary Centres (or CMS in Spanish) in ten highly tourism dependent provinces, of which Tierra del Fuego is one. On the 14th of April, 2021, Ushuaia’s CMS was inaugurated. The purpose of these centres is to add assistance, laboratory and observation facilities to tourist destinations that may suffer increasing medical demand during high season¹⁶. In his way, this CMS, located in the port area, responds to a strategy to enable economic recovery in tourism-dependent localities.

The vaccination programme uses this same strategy. Its rollout started in early 2021 and is administered federally. So far, Tierra de Fuego has received 30,601 doses, mostly the Gam-COVID-Vac (Sputnik-V). All inhabitants over 60 years that voluntarily applied, as well as health personnel, have received a first dose. At the moment of writing, the Provincial government is calling all risk groups within the age range of 18 to 59, to voluntarily apply for the first dose. In Tierra de Fuego, between 800 and 1,000 persons are vaccinated daily¹⁷.

Resilience and sustainability in Tierra de Fuego

Argentina is going through the second wave, and maintains its politics of ASPO and DISPO depending on the circumstances within each municipal jurisdiction, complemented with policies of economic assistance to enforce local resistance to a global health care crisis. Public policies in Tierra del Fuego continue to aim at the immediate impacts of the pandemic, which is considered the best focus in order to leave behind the state of epidemiological emergency. Apart from initiatives such as the CMS, which springs from a future-centred vision, a sophisticated road map towards a post-pandemic reality has not yet been articulated. The main bet for health care security and economic recovery is the vaccination programme.

On the national scale, the Fuegian community has been one of the most severely impacted populations of Argentina, especially in terms of fatalities. This is why measures have often been stricter or more lasting than in other low population density regions throughout the country. Conversely, the Province is one of the most advanced in terms of vaccination, having applied the first dose at an estimated 15% of its population, and the second dose at 5%. Also, due to its relatively young population, authorities are currently vaccinating younger populations more quickly than in other districts, which implies that more protection has been reached for riskier groups and the elderly.

The local economy of Río Grande, characterized by the production of electronic devices for the national market, proved to be more resilient than that of Ushuaia, that is profoundly dependent on international tourist flows. Nevertheless, despite of the aforementioned recovery of the labour market during 2020, other sources estimated in October 2020 that 40% of the Fuegian

¹⁶ Source: <https://www.tierradelfuego.gob.ar/el-gobernador-mejella-y-el-ministro-katopodis-inauguraron-el-centro-modular-sanitario-en-ushuaia/>.

¹⁷ Retrieved April 21 from: <https://www.tierradelfuego.gob.ar/la-campana-de-vacunacion-contra-el-covid-19-continua-cumpliendo-las-etapas-planificadas/>.

population was living in poverty¹⁸, which represented an annual increase of 15.3%.

The Fuegian economy is founded on an external demand (national and international) of luxury goods and services (electronics, tourism). Therefore, it is susceptible to both national and global vicissitudes. With this production matrix placed in the light of sustainability, the pandemic provides us with a profound and painful lesson. Despite the fact that the province formally adhered to the 2030 agenda for sustainable development goals on November 2016¹⁹ announcing strong commitments²⁰, no explicit articulation was made between COVID-19-related policies and the Objectives of Sustainable Development (or ODS in Spanish), or other perspectives of sustainability²¹. Rather, the pandemic demonstrated that with respect to economic and public health conditions, post-pandemic policies face great challenges in transitioning towards sustainability.

In conclusion, Fuegian islanders have been hit hard by the pandemic, while new horizons of economic recovery are still far away. At the same time, different state policies at all levels have softened the impact both for employers,

employees, and independent workers in 2020, support that so far has not been extended to the same degree in 2021. In terms of medical assistance, the local governments reacted quickly and strongly, amplifying local health care infrastructure and professional staff to attend it. However, the steep increase in the number of positive cases, both at the provincial and national levels, combined with uncertainties at local level and the abandonment, by governments, of urgent actions towards sustainability, does not bode well for the future.

Useful sources (in Spanish)

- <https://www.argentina.gob.ar/coronavirus/vacuna/aplicadas>
- <https://www.tierradelfuego.gob.ar/categoría/coronavirus/>
- <http://untdf.edu.ar/CORONAVIRUS>
- <https://turismoushuaia.com/contenidos/covid-19/>

¹⁸ See, for instance: https://www.eldiariodelfindelmundo.com/noticias/2020/10/01/88646-casi-el-40por_ciento-de-los-fueguinos-es-pobre.

¹⁹ See "Informe Provincial 2017", disponible en https://www.argentina.gob.ar/sites/default/files/informe_de_gestion_2017_tdf.pdf.

²⁰ For instance, by the former governor.

²¹ The ODS stem from one of many interpretations of sustainability, as we argument in BLOCK, Thomas, PAREDIS, Erik, VAN AERT, Peter (2020). Sostenibilidad en Tiempos Antropocénicos. Una propuesta didáctica para un abordaje social y político de problemas de sostenibilidad. RISUS - Journal on Innovation and Sustainability, 11 (4): 200-220. DOI:10.23925/10.23925/2179-3565.2020v11i4p200-220.



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ISLAND



COVID-19 Island Insights Series

No. 25, September 2021

Tierra de Fuego. Chile

Alejandro Nuñez Guerrero

The COVID-19 Island Insights Series is an initiative spearheaded by the Strathclyde Centre for Environmental Law & Governance (SCELG) and the Institute of Island Studies (IIS) at the University of Prince Edward Island in collaboration with Island Innovation. The initiative brings together critical assessments of how specific islands around the world have performed during the COVID-19 pandemic and the extent to which their recovery plans can promote resilience and sustainability in the long term.

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Tierra del Fuego, es una de las 56 provincias de Chile. Comprende la porción occidental de la Isla Grande de Tierra del Fuego (accidente geográfico compartido con la República de Argentina).

Población estimada: 8.364 habitantes¹

Superficie terrestre: 29.484,7 km²

Alejandro Núñez Guerrero

Universidad de Magallanes

Colaboración de Rodolfo Cárdenas Alvarado. Diario Cordón Baquedano

Datos de COVID-19 y cronología (19 de Marzo 2021)⁵

Cantidad de casos confirmados:
978

Número de pacientes fallecidos:
10

Número de vacunas: aplicadas
4.682, de las cuales 3.007 corresponden a la primera dosis y 1.675 a la segunda dosis.



TIERRA DE FUEGO²

¹ Extraído el 23 de mayo 2021 de <https://www.bcn.cl/siit/nuestropais/region12/>.

² Source <https://www.worldatlas.com/islands/tierra-del-fuego.html>

COVID-19 en la Isla Grande de Tierra de Fuego, Chile.

La Isla Grande de Tierra del Fuego (superficie total de 47.992km²) es dividida en dos jurisdicciones por el meridiano de 68° 34'O. La porción occidental de la isla (29.484,7 km², o 61,43%) pertenece a la Provincia Chilena de Tierra del Fuego, mientras la sección oriental (18.507,3 km², o 38,57%) es parte de la República Argentina³. Los habitantes son el producto de los descendientes que quedaron de las familias fundadoras, población militar que migran y se asientan luego de llegar a la Isla, así como trabajadores del área de servicios públicos y empresas locales de exportación.

La ciudad de Porvenir es la Capital de la Provincia Fueguina. Este territorio recibe el nombre también de SubAntártica. El lado Chileno de la Isla es zona obligada de paso terrestre, para quienes viajen desde el sector Argentino hacia el norte de sus países. Existe una gran población local en Chile, que se desplaza constantemente a las ciudades de Río Grande y Ushuaia, para ver familiares, ir a centros médicos y por temas de turismo y ocio también.

El Primer caso de SARS-CoV-2 en Chile, se confirmó el 03 de Marzo del 2020 y era portado por un hombre de 33 años, en la ciudad de Talca (2.000 Km. de Porvenir), quien había estado viajando durante casi un mes por distintos países del sudeste asiático, entre ellos Singapur, Indonesia, Malasia y España⁴. En Porvenir, se reporta que el primer caso se habría presentado el 27 de Marzo de 2020⁵. Importante señalar que el 22 de Diciembre llegó a Chile la nueva variante de covid-19 descubierta en Reino Unido, al contagiarse en Europa una viajera chilena que regresó al país.

Todas las medidas tomadas en Tierra del Fuego, para hacerle frente a esta Pandemia,

han correspondido a decisiones desde el Gobierno Nacional en la Capital de Chile en Santiago, realizándose las siguientes acciones⁶:

- 15 de Marzo: Suspensión de Clases de todos los Establecimientos Educativos.
- 16 de Marzo: Cierre de Fronteras terrestres, marítimas y aéreas.
- 18 de Marzo: Se decreta “Estado de Excepción Constitucional de Catástrofe” para todo el territorio nacional por 90 días.
- 22 de Marzo: Se instaura un “Toque de Queda”, que decretaba la prohibición de cualquier ciudadano de circular entre las 22:00 y las 5:00 horas.
- 25 de Marzo: Se anuncia “Cuarentena Total” para 7 Comunas de Santiago.
- 19 de Abril: Presidente Piñera acuña la frase “nueva normalidad”, sin saber la magnitud de la Pandemia.
- 13 de Junio: por las grandes críticas al Gobierno, se realiza un cambio de Ministro de Salud.
- 19 de Julio: Se adopta la estrategia “paso a paso”, para definir según fases lo que se puede hacer por la ciudadanía en sus territorios. Se avanzaría en 5 pasos desde Cuarentena a Apertura Avanzada.
- 23 de Noviembre: Apertura frontera aérea (aeropuerto de Santiago).
- 24 de Diciembre: Llegan las primeras 10.000 dosis de vacunas Pfizer y BioNTech, para vacunar a funcionarios de salud en primer lugar.
- 30 de Diciembre: Creación de un Permiso de Vacaciones para personas que

³ Van Aert P. (2013) Tierra del Fuego. In: Baldacchino G. (eds) The Political Economy of Divided Islands. International Political Economy. Palgrave Macmillan, London.
https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137023131_11

⁴ Extraído el 23 de mayo 2021 de <https://www.biobio-chile.cl/>.

⁵ Extraído el 23 de mayo 2021 de <https://www.cordonba-quedano.cl/>.

⁶ Extraído el 23 de mayo 2021 de <https://www.pauta.cl/nacional/cronologia-primer-ano-pandemia-chile>.

residan en comunas que se encuentren en Transición (Paso 2).

- 21 de Enero: Presidente Piñera informa que se cuenta con más de 10 millones de dosis de vacunas Pfizer y BioNTech, además de tener otras 10 millones de vacunas aseguradas de Sinovac.
- 03 de Febrero 2021: se inicia en Chile el proceso de vacunación masiva, partiendo por los adultos de 90 años o más. A la semana se informaba que existían más de 1 millón de personas vacunadas.
- 15 de Febrero 2021: Se comienza a vacunar a los trabajadores de la Educación.

Por lo tanto en la Isla de Tierra del Fuego lado Chileno, al comienzo de la Pandemia se suspendieron los comercios que no eran prioritarios (pues residentes podíamos ir a comprar alimentos en ciertos horarios y días según la fase en que nos encontráramos), y se suspendieron también los eventos masivos. La Barcaza dejó de viajar a la Isla por un tiempo (único transporte, pues avión se suspendió prácticamente por todo el periodo), pero luego, cuando se instauraron protocolos Covid19, retomó los viajes para poder recibir a personas desde Servicios de Gobierno y Empresas que viajan a la Isla. El Turismo fue el sector más golpeado.

Tanto las actividades educacionales como laborales, fueron siendo absorbidas de manera telemática (virtual), lo cual dejó en evidencia los problemas de contar con un mal servicio de internet (baja velocidad), como también el que existan lugares habitados donde no llega la señal (además que varias personas no cuentan con Computadores en sus hogares y espacios suficientes para poder desarrollar la actividad de manera eficiente). El sector de la Salmonicultura ha seguido trabajando, lo cual también ha sido causal de nuevas infecciones en la Isla. Se instauraron residencias sanitarias en Hoteles y otras dependencias autorizadas por el

Servicio de Salud y se ha mantenido lo relacionado con distanciamiento social y uso de medios de protección además del uso de Alcohol gel.

Existió un periodo de aproximadamente 94 días entre mayo y Julio del 2020, donde no existieron casos positivos de Covid19 en las Comunas Faguinas, pero luego el 09 de Agosto el Municipio de Porvenir confirmaba el caso positivo de un funcionario municipal⁷.

Ha existido el auge de las Ventas de Productos por delivery (taxis locales), tanto en supermercados como servicios de alimentación (restaurantes y servicios de comida rápida).

Producto de estar más tiempo en casa y por la devolución el 10% de nuestros Ahorros de Jubilación que teníamos en la Administradora de Fondos de Pensiones, se ha notado un aumento del gasto en mascotas (desde alimentación a servicios de corte de pelo, vacunas y cirugías de esterilización y castración), y en el área de construcción (hermosamientos frontis, ampliaciones para oficinas y habitaciones).

Resiliencia y sostenibilidad en Tierra de Fuego

Se vivieron momentos muy preocupantes el año 2020, por diferentes temas: el desconocimiento de la Enfermedad y la poca comunicación de las Autoridades Nacionales; por no existir una Gobernanza clara a nivel Regional; por el alza de precio de algunos alimentos y productos de limpieza, además del desabastecimiento local; cierre de emprendimientos locales de no primera necesidad; término de faenas laborales de empresas locales por falta de protocolos sanitarios; personas enfermas o con sintomatología tenían que viajar a Hospital Clínico en Punta arenas, lo cual significaba alojar, comer y desplazarse a otra ciudad, con los costos que eso conlleva.

⁷ Extraído el 23 de mayo 2021 de <https://www.radioporvenir.com/2020/08/10/tras-mas-de-90/>.

Este 2021, las personas al lado Chileno de la Isla, han podido asimilar las medidas propuestas por el Plan Paso a Paso, según pasa el tiempo, ayudándose entre familiares y amigos (mayor fiscalización en las noches), pero todo cambia al entrar en periodos de cuarentena, donde sólo entregan dos permisos para salir dos horas de casa para hacer trámites varios (banco, farmacia, supermercados). Los negocios de barrios han funcionado de manera normal, manteniendo un máximo de personas que pueden ingresar a los locales, además de usar mascarilla y los protocolos sanitarios respectivos e inclusive ha existido un alza de comercio ilegal desde hogares (donde no se declara el impuesto IVA).

Además de existir un problema económico y social en lo que respecta especialmente a jefas de hogar con problemas laborales/familiares, ausencia de centros para cuidados del adulto mayor y aumento del uso de Drogas, Alcohol, enfermedades mentales y sobrepeso, se suman otras dos grandes preocupaciones que tienen que ver con el área de la Educación y el Medio Ambiente.

Los Establecimientos en Tierra del Fuego no realizan clases todos los días, sino que entregan una cantidad de guías, las cuales deben realizarse con apoyos de Padres y Madres con unos videos explicativos por internet, para luego dejarlas en los establecimientos resueltas o subida a una plataforma web (cuando hay buen internet y para quienes tienen esta posibilidad de contar con internet y computadores). Esta manera de trabajar no está resultando como se esperaba, problema que no es causado por Profesores y Directivos de los Establecimientos de la Isla (que colocan todo el entusiasmo), sino que a nivel País, lo cual de seguro repercutirá en sus resultados posteriores⁸.

⁸ Murillo, F. Javier, & Duk, Cynthia. (2020). El Covid-19 y las Brechas Educativas. *Revista latinoamericana de educación inclusiva*, 14(1), 11-13. <https://dx.doi.org/10.4067/S0718-73782020000100011>

⁹ Extraído el 23 de mayo 2021 de <https://www.elagoradio.com/chile/los-desafios-ambientales-de-chile-tras-el-covid-19/>

Con respecto al Medio Ambiente, se sabe que estamos viviendo una Crisis Climática que requiere acciones inmediatas para resolver, pero muy poco puede hacerse en este periodo para fiscalizar funcionamiento de empresas contaminantes o para educar y concientizar a las comunidades, que ya están cansadas de estar todo el día de manera virtual trabajando⁹.

En Conclusión, el escenario vivido en Tierra del Fuego ya no se puede mejorar, pero claramente se puede cambiar el presente y por supuesto el futuro de la Isla, para ello podrían considerarse de manera estratégica por parte de las Autoridades Nacionales y Tomadores (as) de Decisiones Regionales, los Objetivos de Desarrollo Sostenible (ODS) de la ONU¹⁰, que buscan erradicar la pobreza, proteger el planeta y asegurar la prosperidad para todos (as) quienes habitamos la Tierra. Además en nuestro caso de vivir en una Isla Binacional, debiéramos colaborar como Chile y Argentina, construyendo un futuro juntos (as).

Fuentes Útiles

- <https://www.unep.org/es/noticias-y-reportajes/reportajes/construir-resiliencia-en-los-pequenos-estados-insulares-beneficia>

¹⁰ Extraído el 23 de mayo 2021 de <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/es/objetivos-de-desarrollo-sostenible/>

Mediterranean and Baltic Seas

Small Island States

Malta

Sub-National Island Jurisdictions

Åland Islands

Croatian Islands

Egadi Islands

Lesvos



COVID-19 Island Insights Series

No. 1, November 2020

Malta

Marie Briguglio and Stefano Moncada

The COVID-19 Island Insights Series is an initiative spearheaded by the Strathclyde Centre for Environmental Law & Governance (SCELG) and the Institute of Island Studies (IIS) at the University of Prince Edward Island in collaboration with Island Innovation. The initiative brings together critical assessments of how specific islands around the world have performed during the COVID-19 pandemic and the extent to which their recovery plans can promote resilience and sustainability in the long term.

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Malta is a nation state which forms part of the European Union.

The country consists of an archipelago of islands of which Malta and Gozo are the main inhabited islands.

The combined area of the archipelago is 316km².

The population is 493,559.¹

Marie Briguglio

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Director of the Islands and Small States Institute of the University of Malta, specialising on economic development and climate change in islands and small states.

COVID-19 headline data and timeline

First case detected on 7th March 2020.

Number of confirmed cases until 15th August, 1348, (0.0026 per capita).

Number of fatalities until 15th August, 9 (or 0.002% per capita).

Schools closed on 12th March 2020. Summer schools opened on 1st July 2020.

Main travel restrictions were enacted on 20th March 2020. All travel restrictions were lifted on 15th July 2020.



MALTA.²

¹ NSO, 2020, World Population Day: 11 July 2020, https://nso.gov.mt/en/News_Releases/Documents/2020/07/News2020_114.pdf.

² Map downloaded from https://ian.macky.net/pat/map/mt/mt_blu.gif.

COVID-19 in Malta: An overview

It was on the 7th March 2020, around four months after the first symptoms of the COVID-19 disease emerged in China, that Malta registered its first official case of the Covid-19 virus.³ Within two weeks Malta had 71 reported cases which doubled again within the next week. Half of these cases were related to travel as opposed to community transmission, a distinction which was possible to detect given that screening of passengers landing in Malta (and mandatory quarantine for people arriving from certain countries) had started prior to the detection of the first case, on the 24th February.⁴ Consequently, on the 20th March, all passenger flights to Malta were halted.

Beyond travel restrictions, containment measures were released rapidly following the first detected case. These included public health preparedness, communication campaigns (focusing on social distancing, hand washing and mask wearing), extensive swabbing and contact tracing, as well as several legal notices detailing restrictions complete with penalties and enforcement.⁵ The latter included closure of outlets, banning of activities and lockdowns. Notable among these measures was the closure of schools as early as the 12th March, together with childcare centres and day centres for the elderly. All religious functions and church gatherings, outdoor football games and political activities were also cancelled as of that day. Ten days later, all non-essential retail and services outlets were closed and organised

gatherings were banned. Arguably the most drastic restriction was put in place on the 28th March (3 weeks after the first case) when people over 65 years of age (almost a fifth of the population), pregnant women and people with certain chronic conditions were ordered to stay indoors.⁶

It bears mention that during the COVID-19 April peak, Malta had one of the most trusted health care systems in the European Union.⁷ Malta maintained a relatively flat epidemic curve⁸ such that the highest number of active cases in any single day following the first case was 352, on April 15th. Thereafter active cases declined steadily and on the 1st of June, the Prime Minister of Malta declared that Malta had won the war against COVID-19.⁹

By 5th June all establishments were allowed to reopen and the airport reopened on the 1st July. All travel bans were lifted on the 15th July 2020, during the week which saw the lowest number of active cases (just 3 cases on the 17th July) and a 7-day stretch of no new cases.¹⁰ The situation changed dramatically thereafter. The number of active cases rose rapidly, reaching 557 active cases on the 15th August.¹¹ Mass touristic and leisure events were found to be the main sources of transmission. As pressures from health professionals mounted (including strikes), government once more introduced restrictions.¹²

³ Liu Y-C et al., 2020. COVID-19: The first documented coronavirus pandemic in history, *Biomedical Journal*, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.bj.2020.04.007>

⁴ Information retrieved on the 17th August from the Ministry of Health website SAHHA, <https://deputyprimeminister.gov.mt/en/health-promotion/covid-19/Pages/covid-19-infographics.aspx>

⁵ Information retrieved on the 17th August from the E&Y website https://www.ey.com/en_mt/responding-to-covid-19

⁶ Information retrieved on the 17th August from the E&Y website https://www.ey.com/en_mt/responding-to-covid-19

⁷ Eurofound, 2020. Living, working and COVID-19: First findings - April 2020, Dublin.

⁸ Dong, E., Du H., Gardner, L. 2020. An interactive web-based dashboard to track COVID-19 in real time. *The Lancet*

infectious diseases; and information retrieved on the 16th August from the website <https://www.bbc.com/news/business-52450958>

⁹ Information retrieved on the 16th August from <https://www.tvn.com.mt/en/news/malta-won-the-war-against-covid-19/>

¹⁰ Information retrieved on the 17th August from <https://www.worldometers.info/coronavirus/country/malta/>

¹¹ Information retrieved on the 17th August from <https://www.worldometers.info/coronavirus/country/malta/>

¹² Information retrieved on the 17th August from <https://theshiftnews.com/2020/08/05/daily-average-of-reported-covid-19-cases-reaches-april-peak/>

Key Economic and Societal effects of the Covid-19 outbreak in Malta

At around the time of the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Maltese economy was just emerging from a period of unprecedented growth, with relatively stable prices and unemployment lower than 4%.¹³ This afforded Malta the fiscal reserves necessary to support businesses and to mitigate the impact through targeted and temporary support and stimulus packages.¹⁴ In fact, Malta had one of the most generous COVID-19 financial bailouts in the world.¹⁵ A series of measures were rolled out in March, costing nearly €2 billion (around 14% of GDP). These included supporting families and businesses; safeguarding pension rights and safeguarding employment. It was estimated that around two-thirds of Malta's private sector employees were financially assisted in one way or another.¹⁶ Malta also successfully negotiated a package worth some €992 million, as part of a €750 billion EU rescue package.¹⁷

Nonetheless, the outbreak significantly disrupted the Maltese economy, especially the tourism sector. Despite the fact that it had been a stalwart of the Maltese economy since the 1980s, this sector proved to be a highly vulnerable one.¹⁸ In 2019, tourism accounted for some 13.7% of the total gross value added (GVA), with a record 2.7 million tourists, spending some €2.2 billion.¹⁹ Increased connectivity and diversification of the tourism

sector had helped to drive this growth. Hotel beds had increased by more than 7,000 over the period between 2013 and 2018, and despite the fact that hotel profitability had plateaued in 2018, more beds had been given development permits.²⁰ As COVID-19 hit the islands, the risk of losses on high capital invested, coupled with low liquidity left hoteliers highly vulnerable. As a result, there was considerable pressure by the industry and its representatives to relax restrictions as quickly as possible.²¹ But once the restrictions were lifted, transmission soared, leading Malta to be removed from the safe-travel list of several countries of tourism origin.²²

Meanwhile, a commensurate blow was felt in the linked wholesale and retail sectors (accounting for 9.8% of total gross value added and 13.7% of total registered employment).²³ As tourism contracted, retail enterprises saw their revenues plummet, while continuing to face the burden of wage bills and overheads. The losses in the sector were worsened by the added blow of subdued consumption by Maltese nationals and by a shrinking foreign labour force, previously resident in Malta.²⁴ The latter had constituted a key part of Malta's economic growth plan, to compensate for a stagnant natural population growth. Yet, as foreign workers experienced lower earnings or loss of jobs, their departure from Malta only accentuated the negative multiplier effect. The

¹³ Central Bank of Malta, 2020. Quarterly Review 2020, Vol. 53 no. 1. Central Bank of Malta, Valletta.

¹⁴ Information retrieved on the 13th August from the Malta Enterprise website <https://covid19.maltaenterprise.com/?re-generating-the-maltese-economy>

¹⁵ Elgin, C., Basbug, G., Yalaman, A., 2020. Economic Policy Responses to a Pandemic: Developing the COVID-19 Economic Stimulus Index. COVID Economics, Vetted and Real-Time Papers 3, 10 April 2020.

¹⁶ Information retrieved on the 17th August from <https://ww1.issa.int/news/social-security-responses-covid-19-case-malta>

¹⁷ Information retrieved on the 13th August from the Malta Today website https://www.maltatoday.com.mt/news/eu-robe/102607/almost_1_billion_in_eu_covid19_recovery_funds_proposed_for_malta#.XzTqwjWxVzo

¹⁸ Briguglio, L., and Avellino, M. 2019. Has overtourism reached the Maltese Islands? Occasional Papers on Islands and Small States, 1. Islands and Small States Institute, University of Malta.

¹⁹ Information retrieved on 17th August from the NSO website https://nso.gov.mt/Home/SELECTED_INDICATORS/Pages/Sub-Selected-Indicators/Tourism.aspx

²⁰ Fabri, J.P., Fennech, G., Fabbri, S., Cassar, V., Spiteri, J., 2020. Section 2, The Local Context, Agile Publication. Retrieved at <https://seedconsultancy.com/agile/>

²¹ Information retrieved on the 13th August from the Malta Business weekly <https://maltabusinessweekly.com/mumn-mhra-chamber-of-commerce-welcome-relaxation-of-measures/7677/>

²² Information retrieved on 17th August from the Malta Independent <https://www.independent.com.mt/articles/2020-08-13/local-news/UK-adds-Malta-to-travel-quarantine-list-6736226089>

²³ Information retrieved on 17th August from the NSO website https://nso.gov.mt/Home/SELECTED_INDICATORS/Pages/Sub-Selected-Indicators/Tourism.aspx

²⁴ Fabri, J.P., Fennech, G., Fabbri, S., Cassar, V., Spiteri, J., 2020. Section 2, The Local Context, Agile Publication. Retrieved at <https://seedconsultancy.com/agile/>

contraction was felt not only in the retail sector, but also in the housing rental market.

It is worth noting that the extent to which the pandemic impacted foreign visitors (tourists) and expenditures by foreign residents living in Malta was particularly dramatic given the extent to which both phenomena were previously hailed as being key to Malta's economic growth²⁵

The outbreak of COVID-19 also exposed societal fragilities. In particular, while health was considered to be a strong suit of Malta, mental health emerged as a weak link. Although Maltese people enjoy one of the longest life expectancies in the European Union, there is a rising disease burden from mental health issues.²⁶ Loss of income, jobs and drastic changes to lifestyle, not to mention the illness itself and the trauma of not seeing or losing loved ones, led to significantly lower levels of wellbeing during the pandemic.²⁷

Post Covid-19 world: resilience and sustainability

The Covid-19 outbreak was an opportunity to reflect about resilience and sustainability and on the extent to which policy was aligned with the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. At the time of writing, Malta scored 62/100 on the European Union Scoreboard,

²⁵ Information retrieved on the 17th August from <https://whoswho.mt/en/as-tourism-will-continue-to-struggle-gains-experienced-by-winners-of-this-new-nor-mal-will-intensify---lino-briguglio>

²⁶ OECD/European Observatory on Health Systems and Policies, 2019. Malta: Country Health Profile 2019, State of Health in the EU, OECD Publishing, Paris/European Observatory on Health Systems and Policies, Brussels. <https://doi.org/10.1787/05db1284-en>.

²⁷ Information retrieved on the 13th August from the Times of Malta <https://timesofmalta.com/articles/view/study-reveals-drop-in-peoples-happiness-due-to-virus-outbreak.786716>; and the Malta Association of Psychiatry https://map.org.mt/2020/08/11/a4mh-press-release-mental-health-service-delivery-should-be-a-priority-in-covid-19/?fbclid=IwAR18gkbt7S_0zIKFH-4jTt-q7llkoF8d00ysNsKU-m-iSzUeysxCn8Mbbs

and ranked 24 out of 28 member states. Considerable challenges remained in all the goals bar decent work and economic growth.²⁸ As the effects of the pandemic unfolded various academics and stakeholders commented on resilience building for the future and a renewed focus on sustainability in envisaging a post-COVID-19 future.²⁹

Malta's economy has frequently been described as having developed too fast and furiously, with the consequence of depletion of natural resources, loss of cultural assets, and higher levels of waste, air, climatic noise and marine emissions than could have been achieved with more prudent growth.³⁰ The COVID-19 outbreak had allowed people to imagine what Malta could be like with fewer private vehicles on the roads, lower pollution, greenhouse gas emissions and congestion.³¹ In the words of environmental experts, COVID-19 had achieved what countless agreements policies and plans had failed to do.³² The post-COVID-19 challenge was described as one where the economy could restart without resorting to subsidising pollution, where recovery would be stimulated by government investment in green infrastructure, where aid would favour cleaner consumption and production, enable transport modal shift and focus on regeneration rather than new building development, with the adoption of circular economy concepts for the construction industry.³³

²⁸ Information retrieved on the 8th October from EU SDG Index, 2019 <https://eu-dashboards.sdgindex.org/countries/malta>

²⁹ Information retrieved on 17th August from <https://whoswho.mt/en/malta-does-not-need-to-re-invent-the-wheel-to-green-the-economy-economist-marie-briguglio>;

³⁰ Briguglio, M., 2017. An Economy on Steroids. Information retrieved on 14th August from <https://timesofmalta.com/articles/view/An-economy-on-steroids.649396>

³¹ See for instance <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kFszkO55gJI>

³² Deidun A., 2019. Post COVID-19 environmental scenarios. In Fabri, J.P., Fennech, G, Fabbri, S., Cassar, V., Spiteri, J., 2020. Agile Publication. Retrieved from <https://seedconsultancy.com/agile/>

³³ Information retrieved on 17th August from the Times of Malta <https://timesofmalta.com/articles/view/post-covid-construction-make-it-sustainable-social.788042>

One of the key adjustments that continue to be flagged is the need to expand remotely yet safe working options, thereby reducing greenhouse gas emissions and promoting social distancing.³⁴ Indeed, much as the advent of the pandemic allowed a vision for a lower environmental footprint in future, so too did it shed light on the importance of the digital economy to build resilience.³⁵ The crisis highlighted the potential for the sector broadly and for companies and government entities to transform and enhance work from home and the e-services offer, more specifically.

In the social domain, education received considerable attention as a sector which is both vulnerable yet which offers promise for enhanced resilience. A diverse range of methods of remote teaching and assessment were unfurled in quick succession in response to the crisis, but there was concern that increased reliance on home schooling may well have deepened inequalities in education. The post COVID-19 world of education, it was argued, needs to address persistent challenges like the high early school leaving rates, the low tertiary education rates and the need to enhance the skill-base of the workforce.³⁶

Underlying many discussions on the post COVID-19 future in Malta, whether explicitly or implicitly, was the challenge of corruption, good governance, institutional quality and rule of law, as well as the role of the media as the fourth pillar of democracy. These issues were high on Malta's mainstream media agenda prior to the outbreak, in turn linked to Malta's reputation and attractiveness.³⁷ Their importance became ever more evident with the pandemic.

Within the public policy sphere, a host of future visions, strategies and action plans were in place, or in the making - some of which acknowledged the SDGs. Notably, a vision for sustainable development (with a 2050 time frame) had been issued in 2018, with a view to implementing the SDGs - following Malta's 2015 commitment, and following a voluntary review undertaken in 2018.³⁸ This vision had mentioned a radical transformation in the waste sector, a low carbon energy and water supply, green infrastructure, sustainable transport, the eradication of poverty and social exclusion, better quality jobs and education, equality, a digitally empowered society and high quality research, amongst others.

In the height of the second COVID-19 outbreak, in August 2020, the recently appointed Prime Minister of Malta also announced his own *economic* vision till 2050.³⁹ Although there was no accompanying document, some similar themes emerged as in the 2018 report, including education, improving infrastructure and becoming carbon neutral. In addition, the report mentions good governance and economic growth. Work to streamline these visions into actual strategies and action plan was still in the pipeline at the time of writing and no clear action plan had been issued. A key challenge is integrating the vision into the work of the different ministries and actually addressing the root causes of the problems experienced.

³⁴ Information retrieved on 14th August from the Times of Malta <https://timesofmalta.com/articles/view/continue-working-from-home-uhm-tells-vulnerable-workers.796371>

³⁵ Fabri, J.P., Fennech, G., Fabbri, S., Cassar, V., Spiteri, J., 2020. Agile Publication. Retrieved at <https://seedconsultancy.com/agile/>

³⁶ Fabri, J.P., Fennech, G., Fabbri, S., Cassar, V., Spiteri, J., 2020. Agile Publication. Retrieved at <https://seedconsultancy.com/agile/>

³⁷ Information retrieved on the 14th August from the Council of Europe [https://www.venice.coe.int/webforms/documents/?pdf=CDL-AD\(2020\)006-e](https://www.venice.coe.int/webforms/documents/?pdf=CDL-AD(2020)006-e)

³⁸ Information retrieved on the 8th October 2020 from Malta Voluntary Review on the implementation of the 2030 agenda, 2018 https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/20203Malta_VNR_Final.pdf

³⁹ Information retrieved on 14th August from Malta Today https://www.maltatoday.com.mt/news/national/104129/robert_abela_lists_governments_economic_vision_during_special_cabinet_meeting_#.XzTxCzWxVzo

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ISLAND



COVID-19 Island Insights Series

No. 6, November 2020

Åland Islands

Petra Granholm

The COVID-19 Island Insights Series is an initiative spearheaded by the Strathclyde Centre for Environmental Law & Governance (SCELG) and the Institute of Island Studies (IIS) at the University of Prince Edward Island in collaboration with Island Innovation. The initiative brings together critical assessments of how specific islands around the world have performed during the COVID-19 pandemic and the extent to which their recovery plans can promote resilience and sustainability in the long term.

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The Åland Islands
29,884 (31st of Dec 2019)
13, 324 km²

Petra Granholm

Petra Granholm, Research Coordinator at the Åland Islands Peace Institute

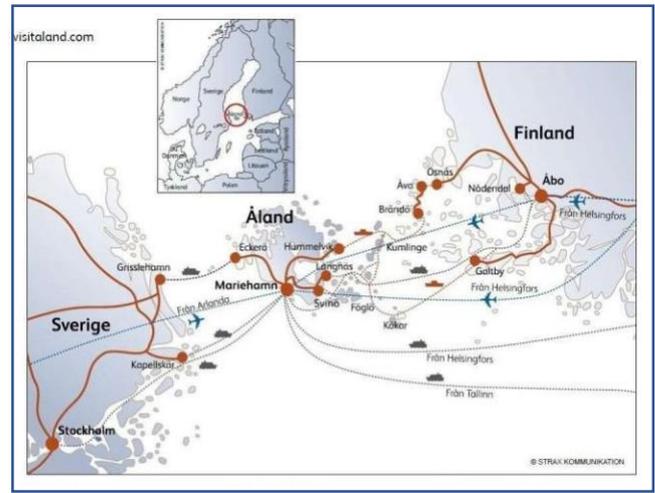
COVID-19 data and timeline

43 cases per 11th of Nov 2020 (0,14 %) vs. 18107 nationally (0,33 %)

Number of fatalities: 0 vs. 363 nationally

Schools closed on 18th of March 2020 and reopened on May 13th

Travel restrictions enacted on 19th of March 2020. From August onwards a colour-coded traffic light model used.



ÅLAND ISLANDS¹

¹ Source visitaland.com

COVID-19 on the Åland Islands

The Åland Islands are an autonomous and unilingually Swedish-speaking region in Finland. It consists of some 6,700 islands that are also demilitarised and neutralised. The division of powers between the central government in Helsinki and the regional government on Åland is regulated by the Autonomy Act of 1991. A major issue between Helsinki and Mariehamn, the capital of Åland, has been how the division of powers was affected by the COVID-19 crisis, as a result of the relationship between the Finnish Emergency Powers Act and the Autonomy Act of Åland. On the 16th of March, the Finnish Government declared a state of emergency based on the Emergency Powers Act in Finland, which also applied to Åland. The Emergency Powers Act gave, in the eyes of Ålandic decision-makers, the Helsinki Government too much power over Åland.² The state of emergency ended on the 13th of May 2020. After that, decisions are made on the basis of the Law on Contagious Diseases. Therefore, on Åland, the Åland Government and the Åland's health care system (ÅHS) are now responsible for the management of contagious diseases.³

Relations with foreign powers and hence, border restrictions, are decided by the Finnish Government. The Finnish Government decided to restrict traffic at Finland's external borders starting on 19th of March. In August, a colour-coded traffic light model was introduced to help communicate risk assessment.⁴ The border restrictions, most notably to Sweden, has been the most significant effect on the Åland society and economy.

On-line education in schools ended on the 14th of May along with the rest of Finland. During the rest of the spring term and again during the autumn, Åland is back to normal face-to-face education in schools.

² See <https://www.alandstidningen.ax/nyheter/sjalvstyrelsen-pa-undantag>. One concrete example was healthcare, which normally is autonomy competence. With the closure of the border to Sweden, Swedish health personnel could not serve the Åland hospital when the state of emergency was declared.

Recommendations concerning distance work remains in place since the beginning of the pandemic. Ålandic organisations have their own internal policies in the matter, thus allowing employees to work from home. Public places such as libraries remained closed until the beginning of June. Restaurants were allowed take-away services during the spring but reopened only on the 1st of June. The restrictions concerning public gatherings of more than 10 people were in place until the 1st of June, after which a ban on large events of more than 500 people was in place until the end of July.

After a calm summer with no registered cases for almost two months, Åland again entered the so-called "acceleration phase" in September, with stricter restrictions and recommendations, such as a limit on public gatherings to a maximum of 50 people.

Key socioeconomic pressures in the Åland Islands during COVID-19

Åland relies heavily on its shipping industry, both historically and to the present day. The shipping industry (cruise liners and cargo) accounts for 16.9 % of Åland's GDP and employs 1673 people (figures from 2017). Only the financial and real estate sectors count for a larger share of the GDP. Many companies in the private sector rely directly or indirectly on a vibrant shipping industry on Åland. Already in the first week of the state of emergency in March, the biggest cruise liners announced the stoppage of all their vessels, resulting in temporary layoff of most personnel on the vessels. For Åland people, seeing cruise ships laying still in the harbours was shocking, as Åland people are used to ferry connections to the mainland

³ Åland Autonomy Act, section 30.9.

⁴ See <https://thl.fi/en/web/infectious-diseases-and-vaccinations/what-s-new/coronavirus-covid-19-latest-updates/travel-and-the-coronavirus-pandemic/traffic-light-model-to-help-in-the-assessment-of-risks-associated-with-foreign-travel>, read 12.11.2020.

and Sweden several times a day.⁵ Suddenly the close connection to Sweden was cut off, resulting in an almost surreal new situation. Except for some absolutely vital travelling and transport of cargo, no vessels were trafficking the Åland-Sweden route before mid- June, resulting in a delayed tourism season. It is clear that the sectors that have been hit the hardest by the corona crisis were the transportation and tourism sector.⁶

The effect of the sickness itself has, however, been insignificant. As the community slowly learns to live with the pandemic, the hardest regulations have been lifted. The loss of Swedish tourists was partly covered by an intensive marketing campaign by Visit Åland towards mainland Finland. Indeed, an observation made by many was that during the emergency rule and also continuing into the summer and autumn, Finns and Ålanders themselves took to nature. Nature reserves and hiking trails on Åland were frequented in numbers not seen before the crisis. Many Ålanders also discovered the phenomenon of “hemester”, i.e. the “staycation”.

Unemployment rates rose during the crisis on Åland. The cruise liner Birka Cruises, for instance, announced in July that it would halt its cruises for good, which affected many Ålandic employees. In October, the relative unemployment rate was 9,3 % in comparison to 3.4 % the year before.⁷ During the heavy restrictions in spring, the number of unemployed and temporarily laid-off people were high. This number has slowly decreased since May, but the long-term unemployment rate is increasing.

The Åland Government has through, among other things, additional budgets contributed

⁵ This is made possible by the Åland protocol, annexed to Finland’s Treaty of Accession to the EU, allowing Åland to stay outside the EU toll union while inside of the tax union. Ferries landing on Åland are therefore able to sell tax-free, mostly alcoholic beverages.

⁶ ÅSUB, Ekonomisk översikt hösten 2020, https://www.asub.ax/sites/www.asub.ax/files/reports/ekonomisk_oversikt_hosten_2020_-_uppdaterad.pdf, read 12.11.2020.

with economic support to the private sector and the 16 Ålandic municipalities in order to mitigate the negative effects of the crisis. The shipping sector has received substantial support both from the Åland Government and from the National Emergency Supply Agency. Somewhat interestingly, the Åland finance sector has shown very strong results during the first half of 2020.⁸

Resilience and sustainability on Åland Island before, during and after COVID-19

In 2016, the Åland Islands embarked on a journey to implement the SDGs through a local action agenda⁹ and a vision: “Everyone can flourish in a viable society on the Islands of Peace”. This work has since translated into a network of agents for change across all sectors of Ålandic society, yearly status reports, and the first European Commission Sustainability Award in 2019. Vital to the crisis recovery work was the Åland Council of Development and Sustainability’s June decision, headed by the Åland Premier, to stick to the Agenda and its goals despite the COVID-19 crisis. The logic behind such a decision was that the Agenda was written to address the global sustainability crisis and that fact was not changed by the virus, in itself an expression of the sustainability crisis. Instead, the Åland Government and the Åland sustainability network Bärkraft.ax decided to mobilise for change. This was realised through a process where different actors from the public, private and civil sector, in addition to parliamentary representatives, brainstormed ideas for lifting Åland out of crisis-mode. The ideas and thoughts together constitute the fourth status

⁷ ÅSUB, <https://www.asub.ax/sv/statistik/arbetsloshets-situationen-oktober-2020>, read 12.11.2020 . This figure includes persons on temporary layoff (*permittering*), who are without work at the moment but technically still has an employer.

⁸ ÅSUB, supra note 6.

⁹ The Åland Development and Sustainability Agenda, see <https://www.barkraft.ax/sites/default/files/attachments/page/media/development-and-sustainability-agenda-for-aland-2017-03-01.pdf>, read 12.11.2020.

report that was presented at the annual Bärkraft meeting in October. Another initiative stemming from the Development and Sustainability Council is a deepening of Ålandic democracy to be carried out through a series of citizens' panels on the topic of crisis – “what has the Corona crisis taught us? What are we prepared to leave behind now, and what are we missing?” The citizens' panels were carried out during the month of September and the results presented during the Bärkraft meeting. The Åland Government has then explicitly said it will take the results of all these brainstorming avenues in account when deciding upon measures to navigate Åland to a “new normal”, the road to recovery. The word “Bärkraft” itself, which is the name of

the Åland sustainability network and movement, in its essence means “resilience”.

Ålanders understand that tackling crises demands all of us to act together. Even before the current crisis, Åland had a system in place to begin meeting the global sustainability crisis. The Åland sustainability work has set the course on 2030, when the goals are to be real-ised, and on 2051, when Åland is supposed to be a fully sustainable society. Other crises will inevitably occur along the way, but through the sustainability work, now deeply rooted in Ålandic governance, the seeds to both material and mental resilience have been planted.

Useful Sources

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- Åland Statistics and Research: <https://www.asub.ax/en>
- Development and Sustainability Agenda for Åland: <https://www.barkraft.ax/english>
- Research at the Åland University of Applied Sciences: <https://www.ha.ax/en/research-projects/>



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COVID-19 Island Insights Series

No. 19, April 2021

Croatian Islands

Ivana Marčeta Frlan and Nenad Starc

The COVID-19 Island Insights Series is an initiative spearheaded by the Strathclyde Centre for Environmental Law & Governance (SCELG) and the Institute of Island Studies (IIS) at the University of Prince Edward Island in collaboration with Island Innovation. The initiative brings together critical assessments of how specific islands around the world have performed during the COVID-19 pandemic and the extent to which their recovery plans can promote resilience and sustainability in the long term.

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Croatian islands

There are 78 islands, as well as 524 islets and 642 reefs and rocks.¹ The next census will likely show fewer than 50 inhabited islands.

Total size: 3,300 km² with the largest island of Krk being 406 km². Population, according to the 2011 Census: 125,000 residents on 50 inhabited islands²

Ivana Marčeta Frlan

Professor in History and Italian language and literature. President of the Dobre Dobričević Association.

Prof. Nenad Starc

Emeritus at the Institute of Economics, Zagreb.



CROATIAN ISLANDS³

¹ The Island Act, Article 6, Official Gazette 73/2020.

² Census of Population, Households and Dwellings 2011, Croatia Bureau of Statistics 2013.

³ Source <https://www.ezilon.com/maps/europe/croatia-maps.html>

COVID-19 on the Croatian Islands

Civil protection in Croatia is hierarchically organized and controlled by the National Headquarters of Civil Protection (NHCP), 22 county headquarters (CHCP) and 556 municipal headquarters (MHCP). The measures prescribed by the NHCP are compulsory on all three levels. The regulations of the NHCP concerning the COVID-19 epidemic were given in the form of several laws enacted in February and March 2020. The Plan for Health Protection in the Republic of Croatia was enacted on February 14, 2020.⁴ The NHCP has been passing decrees ever since. On March 10, the Ministry of Health declared a state of epidemic. Since April 17, NHCP has operated under direct supervision of the Croatian Government. The web site of NHCP is in English.⁵ Although it is updated daily, it does not report data at the municipal level. Thus, no data have been officially available for Croatia's 51 island and 8 island-mainland municipalities. The only more or less available sources are a few island municipal web sites. As there are only four islands with only one municipality (others have 2-8 municipalities), the accuracy and credibility of collected data is low. Although the data refer mainly to county and mainland-island municipal statistics, it appears that during the so called first wave that hit the country in Spring 2020, the pandemic did not affect the islands to any significant extent. The exceptions were the mid-Dalmatian islands of Murter and Brač.

So far COVID-19 measures have been designed and implemented at the national level with no consideration for regional or municipal variations, including on islands. The only exception has been the measure that dealt with island – mainland connections, where all but

essential occupations were prohibited from travelling outside of their area. Since all residents have island-specific identification, this was easier to enforce on the Croatian islands. Schools and kindergartens were closed on March 13, and on-line education activities in the entire country were made compulsory on March 19. On the same date the following measures were applied nationwide, including islands: restrictions on gatherings of more than 5 persons, social distancing, sport events with no spectators, half of employees in the public institutions working at home and closing of border crossings including islands' ports of entry. Contact tracing and 14 day self-isolation were also prescribed. The lockdown reached its peak on March 23 when it was forbidden to leave your place of residence. Towards the end of April most measures were relaxed and by the beginning of May the lockdown was lifted.

The only NHCP decree that referred particularly to islands was passed on March 21 restricting the mainland-island and inter island maritime and air travel.⁶ Only the state company ferries could operate and bus lines on larger islands were cancelled. Five small island sub-archipelagos and three detached small islands with no ferry connections were given one ship connection with the mainland a day. On March 24 yet another small archipelago was allowed a catamaran connection after it had been discovered that it was not covered by the earlier decree. On April 20, the NHCP lifted a ban on movement within counties. It meant that, except for the most southern islands, mainland – island connections were reopened across the archipelago.

So far restrictions of all kinds have been strictly prescribed, relaxed and prescribed again in six

⁴ Official Gazette 19/2020.

⁵ <https://www.koronavirus.hr/en>.

⁶ Official Gazette 34/2020.

island-mainland counties, but no island specificities were taken in account. The elementary schools went on-line already in March 2020, without consideration of small outer islands with no internet signal.⁷ The three-layer hierarchy of civil protection administration does not cover small islands whose municipal seat is on the mainland or on a nearby larger island, so that measures that apply to municipalities are not applicable to the situation on small islands. The state of alert that the health care institutions have been in⁸ means almost nothing to small islands as medical staff there may consist of only one nurse. Samples, if taken at all, are sent to the nearest laboratory on the mainland and it takes days for the results. In the meantime, the virus spreads in the closed island community faster than on the mainland.

The only island-targeted measure was passed on November 23, 2020. An islander from the outer island of Dugi Otok (2,800 inhabitants) contracted the virus on the mainland, got back home and created community spread. The usual restrictions (e.g., masks, 2 meter social distancing, restricted gatherings in closed spaces) were imposed.⁹ The islanders responded by retreating to their homes relying on homemade supplies and the virus was gone in two weeks. There were such cases on other islands but the data remain buried in the county reports. Nevertheless, it is reasonable to assume that the first wave affected only a couple of islands, whereas the second one reached most of the larger islands.

The epidemics paused on the Croatian islands in the summer of 2020 and the Autumn looked promising. However, as in other places in the world, recovery had to be postponed when the second wave gained momentum in October

and reached its peak beginning December 2020. The situation then improved and the number of cases fell towards February, 2021. Although vaccinations commenced in March, the number of cases have started to rise again as threat of the third wave becomes apparent.¹⁰

Key socioeconomic pressures in the Croatian Islands during COVID-19

COVID-19 paused society and the economy everywhere giving islanders the opportunity to better understand which sectors of the island society and economy were more fragile *vis à vis* a shock and which were stronger. What has proved to be fragile in some cases is precisely what was considered a strong island asset before COVID-19, tourism. Fortunately, it was not affected as much as had been predicted. Towards the end of May Croatia was self-proclaimed as a virus free zone, the borders were open and tourist inflow reached some 50% of the usual annual inflow. Being close to the European tourist markets, the northern islands performed quite well under the circumstances. The Southern islands were disadvantaged, but did better than expected. The main obstacle was the lack of a qualified work force in tourism. Seasonal tourism workers who normally come from the mainland in summer were halved. However, due to unreliable statistics only rough estimates can be made. The same holds for other less significant island sectors, such as fishing, small scale agriculture, and small scale manufacturing (e.g., shipyards, canneries, etc.) which, anecdotally, were not affected to a significant extent.

⁷ Official Gazzete 29/2020.

⁸ Official Gazette 35/2020.

⁹ Official Gazette 129/2020.

¹⁰ <https://www.koronavirus.hr/en>.

The suspension of most transport connections revealed the dependence on the mainland. Island health care services proved too weak to handle the case numbers and medics on the mainland were too far away. However, perception of islands as refuges persisted at least during the first wave in Spring 2020. Before the lockdown, individuals, families and even ad hoc groups from the mainland flooded the islands expecting the virus would not follow. Commonly referred to as "corona refugees" by the islanders, they acted in a corona-free way, forgetting that while the risk may be lower on the island, the probability of contracting the virus once it found its way across the sea is much higher than on the mainland. During the first wave this happened on Murter and Brač islands, where a couple of islanders came back from the mainland bringing the virus that so many "refugees" had tried to evade. The virus did not spread much but the perception changed overnight. Almost immediately, the tourists were queueing in ferry ports to return to the mainland. The outer islands experienced a wave of visitors arriving on private boats. There is no official evidence about that but notes that could be found on municipal web sites reveal that most of them sailed in already in March avoiding island ports of entry. In the beginning of the tourist summer season 2020 when it seemed (it was even officially claimed) that the epidemics was over, quite a few "boat refugees" extended their stay as legitimate tourists.

Post Covid-19 recovery on Croatian Islands

The National Island Development Program, adopted back in 1997, defines principles of island sustainability and provides an adequate policy framework.¹¹ The Island Act passed in 1999 prescribes sustainable development measures.¹² The new version of the Act passed in 2018 provides a step forward and incorporates resilience and the smart island concept into the set of island development policy.¹³ Thus, resilience and sustainability coupled with an active role that small islands should have in the overall (mainland & island) development have been well defined prior to COVID-19. Due to the low institutional capacity and insufficient coordination between policy makers in different jurisdictions and departments (e.g., ministries, counties, island and mainland-island municipalities) the implementation of these concepts and legal provisions has lagged. The crisis was labelled an opportunity in the political narrative, but it is not clear as yet how such statements are going to be operationalized. Legally prescribed island resilience and sustainability have been acknowledged as a framework in which future island (and mainland) development should be guided. It is too early, however, to predict how the policy makers and implementing bodies will act post COVID-19. In any case the measures that the NHCP and coastal CHCPs have been passing since the beginning of the epidemics are not encouraging.

As for the 17 UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) none has ever explicitly appeared in island development discourse in Croatia. Goals like *No poverty*, *Zero hunger*, *Clean water and Sanitation*, and *Gender equality* are

¹¹ National Island Development Programme, Ministry of Reconstruction of the Republic of Croatia, Zagreb, 1997.

¹² Zakon otocima (The Island Act) Official Gazette 34/1999.

¹³ Zakon otocima (The Island Act) Official Gazette 116/2018.

not really an issue in the context of the pandemic, whereas *Decent works* and *Economic growth* have been prematurely considered resolved due to the expansion of tourism. Since the islands are close to the mainland, the mainland infrastructure networks (electricity supply in particular) cover them all. In this way *Affordable and Clean Energy* is not considered as an issue either (proponents of smart islands and green technologies are still a minority). On the other hand, *Climate Action*, *Life Below Water*, *Quality Education* and *Good Health and Well Being* do appear in the National Island Development Program and various island development plans and programs, but they are not recognized as SDGs. After Croatia accessed European Union in 2013, EU development documents and goals (European Parliament Resolution on the Special Situation of Islands (2016) in particular) have replaced United Nations documents to quite an extent. As for the post COVID recovery policies which may retrieve SDGs, they are yet to come. We are in the midst of the third wave now, hoping that it will pass before the first tourists come.

Useful Sources

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<https://www.koronavirus.hr/en>
- The official web site of the Croatian Institute of Public Health:
<https://www.hzjz.hr/en/>



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COVID-19 Island Insights Series

No. 2, November 2020

Egadi Islands

Giulia Sajeve

The COVID-19 Island Insights Series is an initiative spearheaded by the Strathclyde Centre for Environmental Law & Governance (SCELG) and the Institute of Island Studies (IIS) at the University of Prince Edward Island in collaboration with Island Innovation. The initiative brings together critical assessments of how specific islands around the world have performed during the COVID-19 pandemic and the extent to which their recovery plans can promote resilience and sustainability in the long term.

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Egadi Archipelago (comprised of Favignana, Levanzo, Marettimo, the Formica islet, and the rock of Maraone)

Population 4.337 (of which about 3400 in Favignana)¹

Size 38.32 km² (of which 19.8 km² is Favignana)²

The Archipelago is a municipality that is part of the Province of Trapani and is located on the western side of the Sicilian Region.

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COVID-19 data³ and timeline

Number of cases 0 [0% of the population vs about 0.5% in Italy and 0.12% in Sicily]

Number of fatalities 0 [0% of the population vs about 0.06% in Italy and 0.006% in Sicily]

Schools closed on 4 March 2020; are reopening in September (only summer camps and a few pre-schools were authorized to open in mid-June)

Travel restrictions enacted on 22 March and lifted on 2 June.



EGADI ISLANDS⁴

¹ Data obtained from the ISTAT website, <https://www.istat.it/it/dati-analisi-e-prodotti/contenuti-interattivi/popolazione-residente>

² Data obtained from the ISTAT website, <https://www.istat.it/it/archivio/156224>

³ Data obtained from <https://lab.gedidigital.it/gedi-visuale/2020/coronavirus-i-contagi-in-italia/>

⁴ Map downloaded from https://it.wikipedia.org/wiki/Isole_Egadi#/media/File:Aegadian_Islands_map_it.png

COVID-19 on the Egadi Islands

Restrictions in Italy were mainly imposed nationally. On 8 March lockdown began, including in the Egadi Archipelago. Anybody coming to the Region⁵ had to inform authorities of their arrival and self-quarantine for 14 days. Sicily also reduced the frequency of ferries to the Egadi and stepped up sanitation procedures. All passengers needed a certificate declaring why they were travelling and had to remain inside their vehicles during the crossing. Checkpoints to control temperature were installed at the ports of departure.

Italy's most restrictive phase was issued on 22 March, when the National Government⁶ established that no one could move out of the municipality in which she/he was located, unless they were essential service workers (e.g., health workers, law-enforcement officers, etc.), or had specialized health needs.

Each family became an island. Isolation was already a way of life for the Egadi residents who are used to spending winters among themselves. However, the islands were even more silent than usual as lockdown was well respected and the many islanders who spent months on the mainland could not return home. The few outsiders – mostly policemen and doctors who travelled from the mainland – were regarded with suspicion. Fear was high as health facilities are very basic on the islands and patients requiring specific treatment need to be taken to Trapani (via ferry or helicopter).

Key socioeconomic pressures in the Egadi Islands during COVID-19

Food was not scarce. The few farmers and cattle keepers of the islands continued their work providing fresh products to their fellow islanders and daily ferries carried the usual goods. Fishermen reduced their activities as the absence

of tourism and the closure of restaurants reduced the demand for fresh fish. After the first few weeks, the municipality, together with not-for-profit local and national organizations, distributed grocery vouchers to the families most in need (though there was some criticism raised over who deserved them and who did not) and organized a system of *grocery on hold* (*spesa sospesa*) whereby a person buys basic grocery goods and leaves them for someone in need to take.

The Egadi were COVID-19-free when Italy entered Phase 2 on 4 May. Timidly, shops were reopened, kids rediscovered the sun, and streets were once again walked. However, life did not come back to normal quickly. Schools did not open, and tourism was still a dream (or a nightmare). In Mediterranean paradises like the Egadi, summers are fully devoted to tourism, which is the main, if not only, source of income for almost the entire population. In summer 2019 the population of the Egadi increased to more than 66.000 people (of which only 4.000 were residents)⁷ and fear was high as it seemed that these numbers would not be reached again in 2020.

The first few tourists who reached the Egadi at the end of May (mostly people who have a second house there) were regarded as COVID-19 carriers and were kept at a distance.

However, as always, reality triumphed over fear, and by mid-June islanders accepted and welcomed the still few Italian (mostly Sicilian) tourists who came to visit the Archipelago – with COVID-19 restrictions well in place: face masks in shops and restaurants (luckily not while seated at the table), physically distanced facilities on the beaches, extra sanitization measures in hotels, and fewer seats on ferries. Most souvenir shops and restaurants reopened, bringing back some vitality to the streets.

⁵ *Sicilian Region Ordinance number 5-13/03/2020*

⁶ Ministerial *Decree number 6*

⁷ Libero Consorzio Comunale di Trapani, available at: http://www.consorziocomunale.trapani.it/provinciatp/images/FAVIGNANA_agg2019.pdf

In July and August the holiday season had a drastic increase of tourists. So drastic that restrictions had to be raised (beaches were closed in the evening of Ferragosto - a national holiday - and masks were required to move around the streets of Favignana's centre).

As the fear for losing their touristic revenues decreased, fear of COVID-19 raised again among the inhabitants. Just like Sardegna, the Egadi could have become a COVID-19 hotspot (with only 3 first-aid health facilities in the whole of the Archipelago).

Post Covid-19 recovery on the Egadi Islands: A different approach?

Even though, during the last weeks of lock down, a lot was said about turning Egadi tourism in more sustainable ways, of lowering numbers and incorporating local knowledge and skills, the wave of tourism was welcomed according to usual habits.

However, *business as usual* tourism may not be the best way forward. The Egadi Marine Protected Area (EAMP) - at 53.992 hectares, the largest in the Mediterranean Sea - encompasses the whole Archipelago and is testimony to the sustainable practices that local people have had for centuries. Sustainability has meant sustainable fishing, little farming and non-intensive agriculture, all practiced by a small population. The arrival of tourism in the last 10 years and its transformation to *mass tourism* risks breaking the fragile equilibrium with local ecosystems.

Responding to the COVID-19 pandemic could be a way to boost the plans that the EAMP, together with the Municipality⁸, some residents and local organizations, has strived to implement. Social distancing - as the director of the

tourism sector of Legambiente (one of the main conservation NGOs in Italy) said⁹ - has a lot in common with the distancing necessary to reduce environmental impacts.

EAMP, which is in charge of taking care of the Integrated Coastal Zone Management (in accordance with the Protocol of the 1995 Barcelona Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment and the Coastal Region of the Mediterranean), is doing its best to lead the Egadi towards a sustainable, tourism-based recovery with the overall policy goal of promoting a more comprehensive, not low-cost, type of tourism. EAMP is developing a list of local youth to be employed to patrol physical distancing on beaches and is working on communication strategies to make tourists aware of new rules and risks. Together with the Municipality, as well as the National Agency for the Development of New Technologies, Energy and Sustainable Economic Development, and as part of a wider state-funded project called *Sicilian Eco-innovation*, EAMP is further developing its efforts to create an environmental quality label to promote sustainable local activities.¹⁰

A way forward could be making the tourism season longer and expanding the types of offers, as well as shifting from low-cost to more luxury facilities in order to cover costs with a lower number of tourists. The Egadi are able to offer more than just sun-bathing and swimming, but also snorkeling, cycling routes, hiking, gastronomy, sport, ethnoanthropological sites and historical artistic beauties. The Western Sicily Touristic District (an institution aimed at promoting local tourism) has launched a new digital campaign called "Caribbean? No, Western Sicily,"¹¹ aimed at showing that in COVID-19 times the western side of Sicily can offer as much as many famous, faraway parts of the world.

⁸ Some of the Egadi's plans for Covid-19 recovery were halted by the fact that the mayor and public servants close to him were arrested for corruption shortly after lock-down.

⁹ *Turismo alle Egadi: il ruolo dell'Area Marina Protetta - Isole Egadi*. Webinair, Comune di Favignana Isole Egadi, 21-05-2020.

¹⁰ <http://www.ampisoleegadi.it/?idx=1448>

¹¹ For the campaign "Caribbean? No, Western Sicily", see <https://nonsonoicaraibi.it/>

Post Covid-19 recovery and the Sustainable Development Goals

These forward-looking tourism plans are to be seen in coordination with the many environmental projects that EAMP is running in the Archipelago – concerning environmental education, environmental protection and valorization, research and monitoring, promotion and communication, and patrolling.¹² Furthermore, the municipality signed the Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy joining the efforts for the reduction of CO₂ emissions. Finally, Favignana has a plan for sustainable transports, a quite efficient recycling-oriented waste management program and is involved in sustainable energy development projects.

While the above-mentioned already existing projects and activities are not attached to any official localized version of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the links are self-evident. In fact, the arrangements being planned on the Egadi and those already present promote the achievement of numerous SDGs, including Goal 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities), Goal 12 (Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns), Goal 13 (Climate Action), Goal 14 (Life Below Water), and Goal 15 (Life on Land) in an integrated way. What might still be lacking is the full, conscious and active participation of local residents: while many are directly involved, others still feel left behind and are not aware of the actions being taken. The population, as anywhere in the South of Italy, mostly shares a feeling of suspicion and abandonment *vis à vis* the national and regional governments, which are still lacking appropriate plans for the sustainable requalification of the Egadi.

Useful Sources

- “Caribbean? No, Western Sicily” Campaign, available at <https://nonsonoicaraibi.it>
- Comune di Favignana Arcipelago delle Egadi official website, available at <http://www.comune.favignana.tp.gov.it/hh/index.php>
- Egadi Marine Protected Area official website, available at <http://www.ampisoleegadi.it/?idx=102>
- Italian Ministerial Decree number 6, available at <https://www.gazzettaufficiale.it/eli/gu/2020/03/22/76/sg/pdf>
- Libero Consorzio Comunale di Trapani, data on the tourism sector, available at: http://www.consorziocomunale.trapani.it/provinciatp/images/FAVIGNANA_agg2019.pdf
- Sicilian Region Ordinance number 5-13/03/2020, available at http://www.comune.favignana.tp.gov.it/favignana/po/attachment_news.php?id=1443
- *Turismo alle Egadi: il ruolo dell’Area Marina Protetta – Isole Egadi*. Webinar organized by the Comune di Favignana Isole Egadi (21-05-2020), available at <https://www.facebook.com/ampisoleegadi/videos/243020976792026>

¹² <http://www.ampisoleegadi.it/?idx=1588>



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ISLAND



COVID-19 Island Insights Series

No. 18, April 2021

Lesvos

Efstratios Sentas and Thanasis Kizos

The COVID-19 Island Insights Series is an initiative spearheaded by the Strathclyde Centre for Environmental Law & Governance (SCELG) and the Institute of Island Studies (IIS) at the University of Prince Edward Island in collaboration with Island Innovation. The initiative brings together critical assessments of how specific islands around the world have performed during the COVID-19 pandemic and the extent to which their recovery plans can promote resilience and sustainability in the long term.

For more information on SCELG see
<https://www.strath.ac.uk/scelg>

For more information about the IIS see
<http://islandstudies.com/>

For further information about Island Innovation see
<https://www.islandinnovation.co/>

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Lesvos is a Greek island located in the northeastern Aegean Sea.

The Island is 1,633 km² (631 sq mi) in size, making it the 3th largest island in Greece and the 7th largest island in the Mediterranean Sea.¹.

Lesvos is also one of the five regional units that make up the Region of the North Aegean².

The population of the island is 114,880 (2020), a third of whom live in the capital, Mytilene

COVID-19 data and timeline (as of 23rd February 2021)

Number of confirmed cases 2,041
(1.77% of the population)

Number of fatalities 41 (0.036% of the population)

Schools closed on March 10, 2020. Re-opened at September, closed again on November 14 and finally re-opened on February 15 (except adult education schools). Online learning was provided by public schools during all the time.

Travel restrictions began on March 9 (for North Italy) and up until now there are restrictions for some countries.

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LESVOS

¹ Retrieved on February 23, 2021 from <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lesbos>

² Retrieved on February 23, 2021 from <https://www.enpe.gr/en/perifereia-voreiou-aigaiou-en>

COVID-19 on Lesbos – An overview

On 26 February 2020 Greece had its first COVID-19 case and the virus reached the shores of Lesbos Island on 9 March 2020. The start of this overview focuses on the national context because so much decision-making on the islands of Greece has been dictated at the national level. The description then shifts to the local situation on Lesbos. Health and state authorities issued precautionary guidelines and recommendations very quickly, while local authorities in the affected areas (not including Lesbos) had the responsibility to implement these measures. The first measure that the Greek government took for the country (on March 9, 2020) was to suspend all flights to and from neighboring Northern Italy, which was identified as the epicenter of the pandemic during those early days.

On 10 March, with 89 confirmed cases and no deaths in the country, the Greek government suspended the operation of educational institutions at all levels and then, on 13 March, closed all cafes, sports leagues bars, museums, shopping centers, sports facilities and restaurants in the country. On 16 March government decided to close the land borders to Albania and North Macedonia, except for the transport of goods and the entry of those who had Greek citizenship or resided in Greece. At the time, the government announced a series of measures worth a total of around 24 billion Euros, equivalent to 14% of the country's GDP, to support the economy.³ Two days later it was decided to close the EU borders and not allow entry to third-country nationals.

On March 22 2020, the Prime Minister announced that a nationwide lockdown would come into effect across all of Greece starting the next day. Greek residents were allowed to go out only to work, to buy food or medicine, visit a doctor, help a person in need, walk a pet or exercise by themselves or in groups of two. They had to carry identification and a special

document that explained the reason for their movements. Alternatively, they could obtain a declaration by text message free of charge⁴. These measures lasted until May 4, when government began to gradually lift restrictions on movement and restart business activity. The measures put in place in Greece were among the most proactive and strictest in Europe and have been credited internationally for having slowed the spread of the disease and having kept the number of deaths among the lowest in Europe.

On 24 October 2020, four levels of precautionary measures were defined, in proportion to the epidemiological status, from low (green), to medium (yellow), to high (orange) and very high (red). Lesbos was initially placed in the highest category but six days later was reclassified into the medium category. More recently (January 2021) the country was divided into two zones: yellow (Level A – Surveillance) and red (Level B – Increased Risk), according to the epidemiological evidence associated with each regional unit.

On 7 November 2020, and following a sharp rise in COVID-19 cases, Greece entered its second national lockdown with new measures and restrictions on movement and business activity. The measures were:

- Wearing a mask was mandatory everywhere in public (indoors and outdoors)
- A 24-hour restriction on movement (exceptions by time zone apply).
- People were allowed to leave their homes only for specific reasons and must notify authorities by sending a text.
- Teleworking (i.e., working from home) was mandatory for half of employees both in the public and private sectors.

³ Retrieved on February 23, 2021 from (<https://www.imf.org/en/Topics/imf-and-covid19/Policy-Responses-to-COVID-19>)

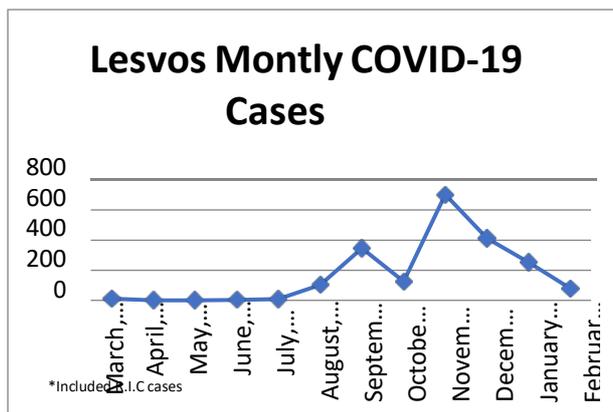
⁴ Retrieved on February 23 from <https://forma.gov.gr/en/>

- A number of businesses, including retail stores, bars, cafes and restaurants, would remain closed.

Unlike the first lockdown in March 2020, while middle and high schools switched to distance learning, kindergartens, primary schools and special schools initially remained open. In November 2020, primary schools and kindergartens closed, initially for two weeks, and since then have switched to distance learning.

In December of the same year the Greek government announced a “click-away” method to accept orders by consumers made online or via telephone. To pick up a purchase, a consumer must have an electronic receipt or a text message (from the store) which provides the name of the store, its ID number, the consumer’s name and the exact time the order will be ready. Only one person is allowed to pick up each order.

Due to the high COVID-19 infections in Lesvos, in January 2021 the government decided to implement stricter measures, including a curfew banning non-essential movement from 6pm until 5am. Movement during the curfew was allowed only for work reasons, and workers had to show the necessary documentation from their employers. In addition, all movement off the island was banned, except for health reasons.



⁵ Retrieved on 27 February 2021:
https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/economy-finance/ip144_en_1.pdf
<https://www.bankofgreece.gr/en/news-and-media/press-office/news-list/news?announcement=49748136-1841-47d7-b5a5-e6a49bc99b6d>

Due to the high viral burden of Lesvos during January (i.e., at the time, 7 deaths and 252 cases), the island was placed on the Level B zone described above (i.e., Increased Risk). This means that, in addition to the common measures for the whole country such as wearing a mask indoors and outdoors, distance learning in higher education schools and traffic restriction using texts, Lesvos maintained a night curfew, restricted all but the middle schools from operating face-to-face, and allowed the “click away” and “click in a shop” methods of purchasing goods from stores.

In February 2021, after a month of strict measures, Lesvos finally made it to Level A status, meaning that the night curfew could be relaxed and high schools were now able to operate face-to-face.

Key socioeconomic pressures in the Lesvos during COVID-19

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic the Greek economy had just managed to recover from a deep recession, due in part to the economic crisis that started in 2008⁵. Early in the pandemic, there was a widespread concern about what to expect in the near future, which led to an increased demand for everyday essentials such as food, hygiene products and antiseptics. Although the government, as well as the stores, assured people that the supply chains were efficient and there was no need for hoarding, people queued in the first days outside supermarkets to purchase basic products in large quantities.

Greece has taken various measures to support the labour market and avoid an economic catastrophe. The national government initially suspended employment contracts, which meant that companies experiencing a reduction

https://assets.ey.com/content/dam/ey-sites/ey-com/el_gr/ey-covid19-potential-economic-scenarios-for-greece-june-2020.pdf
<https://www.nordeatrade.com/en/explore-new-market/greece/economical-context>

in turnover could now suspend their employees' contracts in order to avoid firing them, and in return the government would provide emergency financial support to the employees.

The "Syn-Ergasia" program was also adopted, with which the employer could reduce by up to 50% the working hours of its employees. Once a company joined this program, the company would be required to pay only half of the monthly salary and the employee would receive 60% of the rest of their salary from the government.⁶

In addition, Lesvos has been facing a refugee crisis for the last decade with thousands of refugees and immigrants on the island. In September 2020, a series of fires ravaged the Moria Reception and Identification Center (R.I.C.), leaving 12,000 people in the streets, while COVID-19 cases were increasing. In the refugee camps, the COVID-19 outbreak considerably impaired the daily life of the residents. This was due to limits on mobility, the restricted number of visitors allowed, and the small quantities of provisions available, such as soap and hand sanitizer. Confining thousands of people in overcrowded facilities, living in unacceptable conditions and having insufficient access to protective equipment, has made it impossible to comply with the regulations and to isolate the confirmed cases.

The pandemic's severe impact on Greek tourism is clearly depicted by the 78% decline recorded in tourism receipts during the first nine months of 2020, compared to the same period in 2019.⁷ This includes suspension of most of the flights from the Athens and Thessaloniki airports, as well as the few direct flights from other European countries. Additionally, Greek airports saw a 72% drop in international air traffic during the first ten months of 2020. During the July to September period – the traditional peak

of the tourism season in Greece – the hospitality sector's occupancy rate did not exceed 30%, with an average of 23% per month (in contrast to 71% one year earlier). The financial tools that government took to support the hotel industry have so far covered 1/3 of the average of the total liquidity needs of the hotels.⁸

As of November 11, 2020 all people traveling to Greece from foreign countries were required to have a negative molecular test result (PCR) for COVID-19, performed up to 72 hours before their entry to Greece. This included air and land arrivals to Greece.⁹ All passengers entering Greece from any foreign country, including European Union member states, was required to self-isolate either at their home (for permanent residents) or at the place of temporary residence for 7 days. If they were to stay in Greece for a shorter period, the temporary restriction was valid for the entire period of their stay. Also, as for domestic air travel, it was restricted to essential journeys only (i.e., for health purposes, business purposes, family reunification, or returning to permanent residence).

Specific to Lesvos, there was a much greater decline in the number of flights and tourists. Domestic flights during 2020 decrease by 47.3%, which translates into 171,529 fewer people. International flights have been hit even harder, with a decrease of 88.9% in arrivals.¹⁰

Post Covid-19 recovery on Lesvos: A different approach

How will life on Lesvos look like after this pandemic? It is fair to say that the end of the pandemic is not going to be as abrupt as its start and the virus will be part of everyday life and work for a few more years, hopefully with declining severity, presence, and more available

⁶ Retrieved on February 27 from <https://www.naftemporiki.gr/finance/story/1691065/yperg-15-metra-gia-ti-stiriksi-tis-agoras-ergasias-kata-tin-pandimia-tou-koro-noiou>

⁷ Retrieved on February 27 from <https://www.itep.gr/en/review/the-impact-of-covid-19-pandemic-on-the-hotel-sector-in-2020/>

⁸ Retrieved on February 27 from <https://www.iefimerida.gr/oikonomia/koronoios-i-epidromi-stin-eyropi-htypa-ton-toyrismo>

⁹ Retrieved on February 27 from <https://travel.gov.gr/#/>

¹⁰ Retrieved on February 27 from https://www.mjt-airport.gr/uploads/sys_nodelng/2/2890/Mitilini_12_Trafic_2020vs2019.pdf

activities and mobilities. For an island such as Lesvos, this raises three different questions:

- 1) The migration situation. Will flows of refugees return to pre-COVID levels? This is a very difficult question to answer. The planning for refugees at the moment is for one so-called “closed” structure that will house newcomers until their status is determined. It is unlikely that this will remain “closed” for long and there are questions regarding its capacity. In this regard, local government has not control over the number of migrants housed on the island. Those receiving refugee status will have to leave the island, but it is unknown where in the EU they will go and when this will happen. In retrospect, it seems increasingly likely that the “COVID years” may be viewed as a “respite”.
- 2) Tourism flows. Tourism is expected to rebound once the vaccination process is well under way. This is where steps towards a different approach in managing attractions, resources and tourism flows can be sought. Lesvos has largely been spared the mass tourism flows and mass tourism structures associated with some of the more commercialized Greek islands. This has kept the island as a “hidden gem” for many that appreciate a more relaxed and less crowded destination with many natural and cultural assets. What is lacking is an agreed upon approach to sustainable tourism management at the island level so that Lesvos does not experience the overtourism that is rampant elsewhere. Can this be achieved?
- 3) Social and demographic aspects. The island’s population is among the oldest in Europe and the natural balance (births minus deaths) has been negative for more than forty years. In fact, if not for the steady influx of people that work for the University, the regional government and many other public services, the population over the past generation would have been declining rather than holding steady. The long-term effects of the pandemic may encourage more young people to stay on or return to the island. It is expected that forms of distance

work and economic activities will at least partly replace the pre-COVID economic model. Perhaps there is an opportunity to make the island more attractive to this younger generation of educated residents who obtain their degrees locally and have opportunities to stay and work on the island. It should be noted however that this is an aspirational goal of many small islands. If there was a simple solution to youth out-migration, it would have taken place by now.

Post Covid-19 recovery and the Sustainable Development Goals

In addition to its catastrophic impact on human life and economic activity, the COVID-19 crisis may be a chance for a transition towards a more sustainable economy and society, one that would be more closely aligned to the United Nation’s Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). A post-COVID-19 recovery roadmap is being developed by the national authorities that will use EU pandemic recovery funds and a plan that was developed last year just prior to the start of the pandemic (the so-called “Pissaridis Committee Plan”). That being said, the SDGs are not mentioned directly in this plan.

This lack of planning for sustainability was inexplicable prior to the start of the pandemic, when management of public health and the economy was dire. After one year of fluctuating restrictions, it is even more critical that some of these changes need to be discussed and debated. This includes discussion surrounding mobilities and distance-based activities, where less travel may be beneficial in the long term for residents of the island, but only if this is combined with better infrastructure and opportunities to live and work remotely. It also requires a serious discussion about the tourism sector and related service industries. What type of tourism do we want and need on the island? How can we link these activities sustainably to the rest of the local economy and how can we keep Lesvos a popular destination without succumbing to the problems associated with overtourism? The answers to these questions hold the

key to a more sustainable tourism sector in the future and an improved quality-of-life for Lesbos residents.

Useful Sources

Note that we could find no links with material in English that is specific to Lesbos. The English language items listed here are at a national (Greece) level.

- <https://eody.gov.gr/en/>
- <https://travel.gov.gr/#/>
- <https://covid19.gov.gr/covid-map/>
- <https://www.statistics.gr/en/sdgs>
- http://www.visitgreece.gr/en/home/about_covid_19
- <https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/notices/covid-4/coronavirus-greece>
- <https://www.worldometers.info/coronavirus/country/greece/>
- <https://covid19.who.int/region/euro/country/gr>
- <https://covid19.healthdata.org/greece?view=total-deaths&tab=trend>
- <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/greece>
- <https://www.dimitrisk.gr/covid19/myplots.html?fbclid=IwAR2LFa5goG43hG8jr9q7BY6HioEaCB4gG07CFFpaTPK0PZxtFy588kwxJYY>
- <https://www.covid19healthsystem.org/countries/greece/livinghit.aspx?Section=3.1%20Planning%20services&Type=Section>
- <https://etrr.springeropen.com/articles/10.1186/s12544-021-00481-7>

ANNEX 1

Islands covered by the COVID-19 Island Insights Series:

- [Åland Islands](#) (Finland)
- [Aotearoa New Zealand](#)
- [Azores](#) (Portugal)
- [Barbados](#)
- [Canary Islands](#) (Spain)
- [Croatian Islands](#)
- [Egadi Islands](#) (Italy)
- [Fernando de Noronha](#) (Brazil)
- [Grenada](#)
- [Guam](#) (USA)
- [Hawai'i](#) (USA)
- [Iceland](#)
- [Jamaica](#)
- [Lesvos](#) (Greece)
- [Malta](#)
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- [Newfoundland & Labrador](#) (Canada)
- [Okinawa Islands](#) (Japan)
- [Prince Edward Island](#) (Canada)
- [Seychelles](#)
- [Shetland](#) (Scotland, UK)
- [St Helena](#) (UK)
- [Tierra del Fuego](#) (Argentina)
- [Tierra del Fuego](#) (Chile)
- [Trinidad & Tobago](#)

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The Strathclyde Centre for Environmental Law and Governance (SCELG) is based at the University of Strathclyde Law School in Glasgow, Scotland, UK. SCELG houses EILEAN, an initiative on Law, Islands and Sustainability that aims to develop a better understanding of how island communities engage in legal and political processes around resilience and sustainability. SCELG has provided technical advice to the Scottish Government in the implementation of the Islands (Scotland) Act in 2019 and leads a sustainability education programme called Island Explorers. For further information please contact francesco.sindico@strath.ac.uk or reach us via twitter @scelg and @fsindico.



Island Innovation is a social enterprise and digital media company at the intersection of sustainable development and communications, offering specialised services across various sectors. The organization brings together the private sector, government, utilities, NGOs and universities to advance innovation for sustainability and prosperity in islands worldwide. The 'digital bridges' that Island Innovation creates bring together a diverse array of stakeholders reaching every continent.



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Located in Charlottetown, the birthplace of Confederation and the capital city of Prince Edward Island, the University of Prince Edward Island (UPEI) has a rich history with roots in two founding institutions, Prince of Wales College (est. 1834) and Saint Dunstan's University (est. 1855). Formed in 1969 as the provincial university, UPEI honours its proud legacy through academic excellence and research innovation.

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