REGIONAL: COVID-19
As of 13 September, there are 8,252,989 cases and 309,653 deaths in Latin America and the Caribbean, as well as 6,551,963 recovered cases.

KEY FIGURES
8.2M
CONFIRMED COVID-19 CASES IN LATIN AMERICA & THE CARIBBEAN AS OF 13 SEPTEMBER

KEY FIGURES
18.8K
TESTS PER EVERY 1 MILLION PEOPLE IN ECUADOR, SOUTH AMERICA’S LOWEST RATE

30%
INCREASE IN JAMAICA’S TOTAL CASES DURING THE FIRST WEEK OF SEPTEMBER

GUATEMALA
The head of the Presidential COVID-19 Commission (COPRECOVID) says the country is still working to scale up testing from its current national daily rate of 3,500 tests, noting that the recent acquisition of testing equipment and opening of more testing centres, while helpful, remain insufficient.

COPRECOVID is concerned that testing demand is falling off in the Guatemala department and central district, where daily testing has fallen from 2,800 to 1,400 in recent weeks. Conversely, other areas with low testing rates are showing slight upwards trends, especially in the northwest; COPRECOVID indicates this reversal is an encouraging sign that the body’s strategy of decentralizing testing is working.

ECUADOR
The Government acknowledges difficulties in processing PCR tests, citing the lack of reactive materials and limited laboratory capacities. The Ministry of Health indicates that the Government is seeking international assistance to scale up test processing capacities, which at present are limited to some 20 laboratories, including private and academic facilities. Despite a population of some 17 million, Ecuador has only carried out 340,000 tests across the country; their testing rate per every 1 million inhabitants of 18,875 is the lowest in South America and one of the lowest in Latin America and the Caribbean. The Ministry says the limitations have prevented massive PCR testing and forced public strategies to centre around segmented testing.

JAMAICA
With Jamaica now experiencing sustained community transmission that has led to a 30 per cent increase in total cases in the first week of September, Prime Minister Andrew Holness announced the tightening of the island-wide curfew and other measures to contain the further spread of the virus.

Longer curfew hours will remain in place until 23 September, while public gatherings now only allow for a maximum of 20 people. People 70 or older are under mandatory confinement orders save for set times allotted for purchasing basic necessities. Ministry of Health officials warn that current modelling has up to 1.5 million Jamaicans contracting COVID-19, just over half the population.

Sources:
• Government of Guatemala
• Government of Ecuador
• Government of Jamaica

The numbers presented are for orientation and not conclusive. Sources are reports from national authorities from public websites. 
Creation date: 14 September 2020  Sources: ReliefWeb Feedback: ocha-rolac@un.org  |  www.unocha.org/rolac  |  www.reliefweb.int
CENTRAL AMERICA & MEXICO: MIGRANTS & REFUGEES

Irregular migration from and through Guatemala to the US is growing following the gradual loosening of transit restrictions. Per US Customs and Border Patrol, the more than 13,000 Guatemalans detained at the US-Mexico border in August represent a 70 per cent increase from July.

Guatemalan migration authorities indicate a strong correlation between the increased numbers and the lifting of inter-departmental travel restrictions, which have also allowed more migrants to pass through Guatemala; at least 4,182 Salvadorans and 15,645 Hondurans have reached the US after crossing Guatemala between March and August 2020.

Migration officials also note the increasing deportation of Guatemalans from the US, recording 308 deportees in June, 786 in July and 1,346 in August. The US Embassy in Guatemala and the Foreign Ministry say that the renewed flows show that trafficking groups remained active during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Analysts say that migration will likely increase and reach 2019’s historic tallies as result of the economic impact of the COVID-19 crisis across Central America, while also presenting new challenges. Additionally, migrants in Guatemala and Mexico now face stigmatization as potential disease spreaders.

KEY FIGURES

70% MONTHLY INCREASE IN GUATEMALANS DETAINED AT US-MEXICO BORDER IN AUGUST

Sources:
• Government of Guatemala
• US Customs and Border Patrol

SOUTH AMERICA: WILDFIRES

South America’s Pantanal wetlands, a 210,000 km² ecosystem some 2,500 km south of the Amazon rainforest that spans parts of Brazil, Bolivia and Paraguay, are burning at a record pace in 2020. Brazilian officials say that the number of fires in the Pantanal in July are the highest July totals since record keeping began in 1998, adding that fires across South America at their highest in a decade.

Years of fires, thought to be started by landowners to clear vegetation for cattle grazing and new crops, are incurring a climate change that has reduced humidity currents in the air, robbing the wetlands of seasonal torrential rains that often cause flooding. 2020 water level rises are the lowest in three decades following extreme heat and low rainfall from late 2019. Brazilian officials say that Pantanal dry periods are getting longer, with the number of rainy days during the summer falling by 25 per cent between 1926 and 2016.

Wetlands in north-eastern Argentina around the Paraná river are also experiencing thousands of blazes, with officials estimating that some 11,000 fires in recent months have devastated more than 90,000 hectares of land in the 14,000 km² area. Authorities say the increase in fires is due to a combination of landowner fires and an ongoing lack of rain and severe drought in the continent that has dried out vegetation and made it easier for fires to spread unchecked. The Argentinian Government declared a disaster zone for a 14,000-hectare area in the central province of Córdoba.

The growth in fires and subsequent threat to respiratory health posed by increased smoke and ash come as the continent continues to deal with the COVID-19 pandemic.

KEY FIGURES

25% DECREASE IN RAINY DAYS IN SOUTH AMERICAN WETLANDS BETWEEN 1926 AND 2016

Sources:
• Government of Brazil
• Government of Argentina