

Press release #17
Results from 17 July 2020 to 22 July 2020
Nicaragua, 24 July 2020

The normalisation of a pandemic that has not been handled adequately can be lethal. Do not let your guard down! Use a face mask everywhere, keep a 2-metre distance from other people, don't touch your face, constantly wash your hands with water and soap for 40 seconds, stay home and if that's not possible, use a 3-layered cloth mask and face shield and avoid crowds.

Take preventative measures and let's save lives!

As of 22 July, we report a grand total of 8,755 suspected cases verified by the Citizen Observatory in all departments and autonomous regions (in 136 municipalities, 88% of the country). **This week we have registered 221 new cases which represents a 3% increase compared to the previous week.**

Managua (3,472), Matagalpa (969), Masaya (613), León (609), Estelí (500), Chinandega (310), Madriz (282), Jinotega (273), Granada (248), Carazo (244) and RACCS (209) are the departments and/or regions reporting the highest amount of suspected cases.

Up to the 21 July, the Ministry of Health (MINSa) has reported 3,439 confirmed cases, 839 active cases, 2,492 recovered and 108 deaths (a death toll of 3%). This death toll reaffirms the urgent need for the government to take measures to avoid transmission and count on detailed information collection that would steer decision making to confront the situation more effectively.

Until the 22 July we have reported and verified **2,487 deaths**, of which **138 (6%) can be categorised as deaths from pneumonia and 2,349 (94%) can be reported as suspected deaths from COVID-19.** Of these deaths, 284 (11%) took place in people's homes and 19 (1%) took place during a transfer to a healthcare unit.

These deaths have been reported across the 17 departments and autonomous regions, 120 municipalities (two more than last week, 78% total municipalities in the country). The department of **Managua has registered 35% of all deaths,**

Masaya 10%, Matagalpa 8%, León 7%, Chinandega and Estelí 5% respectively and Granada 4%.

This week we received information on **88 new fatalities**, which represents a **4% increase** in the number of deaths reported in the previous week.

Until the 22 July, the Observatory received reports of **744 healthcare workers with associated or presumed COVID-19 symptoms. These were recorded across all departments or autonomous regions (in 73 municipalities).** Managua, León, Matagalpa, Nueva Segovia and Masaya are the departments with the highest amounts of cases.

As of 22 July, our data shows **99 suspected COVID-19 fatalities in healthcare workers.** Of these, 43 were doctors, 22 nursing staff, 14 administrative personnel, 7 lab technicians, 3 medical visitors, 3 dentists, and 7 categorised as 'other' (support personnel, for example).

Over the last few weeks, the Observatory has received fewer reports of suspected cases and deaths. Various factors influence this:

- a) The nature of our work does not allow us to register 100% of all suspected cases and deaths.
- b) It is possible that the epidemic is spreading towards rural areas – as shown by the number of municipalities that are reporting cases and deaths. It is harder for us to collect information in rural areas, and for people to access healthcare services.
- c) The population with mild, moderate and sometimes severe symptoms are being

looked after at home (often without qualified medical attention).

- d) It is possible we are seeing the results of the precautionary measures taken by people at the end of May and during June.

There is currently an increase in the number of cases in the other countries in Central America (which have taken preventative measures). There are no reasons to presume that the Nicaraguan situation should be different, especially as there haven't been enough precautionary measures taken. It is possible that we will see a new peak for the epidemic in the country over the upcoming weeks. These figures should not motivate us to lower our guard and stop taking preventative measures.

As of 22 July, we have received reports of 2,043 irregularities. Of the 29 irregularities reported this week, **16 (55%) refer to exposure of people through group activities.** There were also reports that 250 Nicaraguans coming from Panama were denied entry to the country.

Dr. Ciro Ugarte¹, Director of Health Emergencies at the Panamerican Organisation for Health (OPS) has stated that the information given by the Nicaraguan government about the COVID-19 epidemic is not enough to correctly evaluate the country's situation.

Please find attached the (Spanish language) report from **16 July 2020 to 22 July 2020**, developed by the Observatory:

| | |
|---|--|
| Suspected cases reported by the Observatory | Deaths from pneumonia and suspected COVID-19 reported by the Observatory |
| 8755 | 2487 |

* Suspected cases reported by the Observatory, deaths by pneumonia and suspected COVID-19 have been verified by a local information source.

| | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Cases confirmed by MINSA | Deaths reported by MINSA |
| 3439 | 108 |

He has also said that the OPS evaluated unofficial sources to understand the country's COVID-19 situation. *“Unofficial sources are those that are used to evaluate the situation and better understand what is happening in the country, especially for the population, it is the people who should implement protective measures, including the widespread use of face masks, handwashing and social distancing”* expressed Dr Ugarte. He also declared that the OPS has asked the government to allow it to send a group of experts to Nicaragua to correctly evaluate the country's epidemiological situation. The OPS has yet to receive authorisation from the government for this visit.

Using official data, an analysis² was made public this week on the excess mortality observed in the country during the period March to June 2020. This analysis shows that between the 11 March to the 30 June 2020, 4,429 more people died than the average over the past three years. Causes of death were pneumonia, heart attack, diabetes and hypertension. This excess in mortality can be considered suspicious or attributable to COVID-19. It is up to the national authorities to shed light on this. The Observatory once again demands to MINSA to make public the weekly epidemiological reports and add COVID-19 to the list of diseases that must obligatorily notified.

¹ <https://100noticias.com.ni/nacionales/102073-ops-fuentes-oficiales-nicaragua/>

² <https://confidencial.com.ni/salubrista-hay-4429-muertos-sospechosos-de-covid-19-segun-datos-oficiales/>