

Puerto Rico claims COVID-19 peak over as concerns remain

June 11 2020, by Dánica Coto



A Puerto Rican flag flies on an empty beach at Ocean Park, in San Juan, Puerto Rico, Thursday, May 21, 2020. Puerto Rico is cautiously reopening beaches, restaurants, churches, malls, and hair salons under strict conditions as the U.S. territory emerges from a two-month lockdown despite dozens of new coronavirus cases reported daily. (AP Photo/Carlos Giusti)

As Puerto Rico considers lifting pandemic quarantine restrictions, health officials said Wednesday that the U.S. territory passed its peak of coronavirus cases and related deaths more than two months ago—though independent experts said those numbers are in doubt.

Miguel Valencia, a health department consultant, said at a news conference that confirmed COVID-19 cases peaked at 84 cases on March 31 and deaths at six on April 6. Overall, Puerto Rico has reported more than 5,300 cases and at least 143 deaths on the island of 3.2 million people.

Health Secretary Lorenzo González said that data will be taken into account when Gov. Wanda Vázquez decides whether to allow curfew and quarantine restrictions to expire on Monday. Those orders in part bar everyone except essential workers from being outside from 7 p.m. to 5 a.m.

But critics complain the island has done too little testing, and most of it using the wrong sort of tests.

Roberta Lugo, a Puerto Rico-based epidemiologist and consultant, told The Associated Press that the official statistics are based on a very limited number of reliable molecular tests—which look for current infections—that were available at the time. She said most of the [confirmed cases](#) were detected by serological tests, which check for antibodies and indicate someone was exposed at some undetermined point. She said 80% of the detections should come from the tests for current infection.

"At this rate, we don't know if there's going to be a second peak," she said.



Elismarie Cruz, manager at Sarkis restaurant, wears a mask as a precaution against COVID-19 while standing in the middle of an improvised food delivery station, in Canovanas, Puerto Rico, Thursday, May 21, 2020. Puerto Rico is cautiously reopening beaches, restaurants, churches, malls, and hair salons under strict conditions as the U.S. territory emerges from a two-month lockdown despite dozens of new coronavirus cases reported daily. (AP Photo/Carlos Giusti)

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