

Situation in The Bahamas & Turks and Caicos Islands 18th December 2020

On 30th January 2020 the World Health Organization (WHO) declared Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) a public health emergency of international concern. As of 17th December 2020, there were 73,207,906 cases and 1,649,138 deaths reported globally. The Region of the Americas accounted for confirmed 31,573,039 cases and 798,006 deaths.

On 15th March 2020, the first confirmed case of COVID-19 was reported in The Bahamas. On 23rd March 2020, the first confirmed case was reported in The Turks and Caicos Islands.

HIGHLIGHTS

The Bahamas

Since 11th December 2020, there were 85 newly confirmed cases.

Among the new cases:

- Fifty-four percent were from New Providence and thirty-four percent were Grand Bahama;
- 42 (49%) are male and 43 (51%) are female.

Among total confirmed cases:

- Eighty percent of deaths (132) were from New Providence;
- 48,722 real time PCR (RT-PCR) tests have been conducted to date.

Turks and Caicos Islands (TCI)

Since 11th December 2020, there were 21 newly confirmed cases.

Among total confirmed cases:

- 361 (47%) are female, 410 (53%) are male and 1 (0.1%) (data to 16th December 2020);
- The age distribution of all cases (data to 16th December 2020) is 0-5 (3.5%), 6-19 (11.8%), 20-29 (19.7%), 30-39 (25.0%), 40-49 (22.0%), 50-59 (11.1%), 60-79 (6.0%), 80 and over (0.6%), unknown (0.3%);
- 158 persons are quarantined/home isolation;
- 10,953 real time PCR (RT-PCR) tests have been conducted to date.

The Bahamas

Island	Confirmed cases	Deaths
New Providence	5603	132
Grand Bahama	1110	24
Abaco	198	3
Eleuthera	153	1
Exuma	113	1
Bimini/Cat Cay	82	2
Berry Islands	47	1
Inagua	19	0
Andros	22	0
Long Island	11	0
Cat Island	8	0
Acklins	7	0
Crooked Island	6	0
Mayaguana	3	0
Pending	351	0
TOTAL	7733	164

Turks and Caicos Islands

Island	Confirmed cases	Deaths
Providenciales	730	5
North Caicos	20	0
Parrot Cay	11	0
Grand Turk	25	1
South Caicos	3	0
TOTAL	789	6

SITUATION IN NUMBERS

TOTAL CASES

7733 Bahamas
789 Turks & Caicos
Confirmed

1401 Bahamas
27 Turks & Caicos
Active Cases

6109 Bahamas
755 Turks & Caicos
Recovered

10 Bahamas
0 Turks & Caicos
Hospitalized

1 Turks & Caicos
Positive Cases that Left Country

164 Bahamas
6 Turks & Caicos
COVID-related Deaths

35 Bahamas
Non-COVID-related Deaths

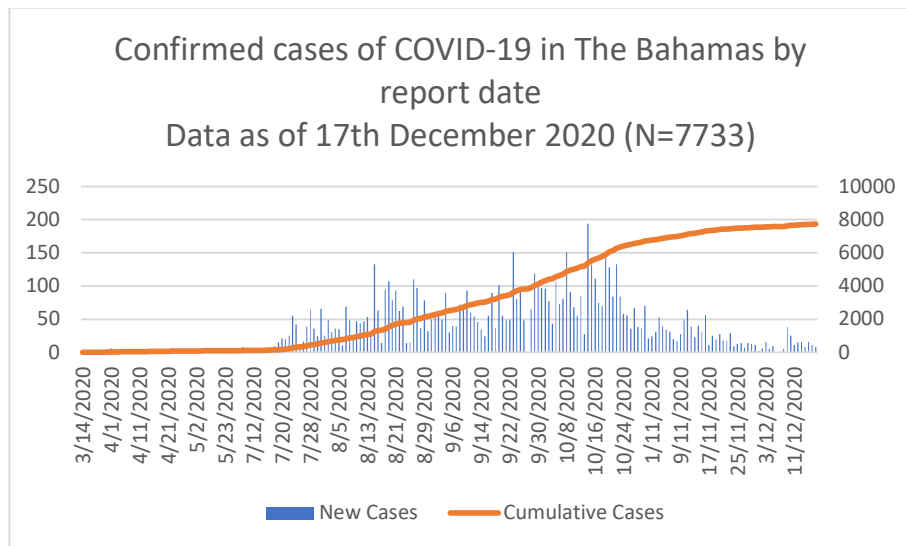
24 Bahamas
Deaths under investigation

PAHO RESPONSE

- ✓ Donation of laboratory supplies
- ✓ Risk assessment and situational analysis
- ✓ Technical guidance
- ✓ Communication
- ✓ Support to local authorities on surveillance and health systems planning

The Bahamas

- Emergency Orders have been extended to 31st January 2021.
- Nightly curfews continue for Abaco, Grand Bahama, Mainland Eleuthera, Mainland Exuma and New Providence from 10:00 pm to 5:00 am, Mondays to Sundays.
- Indoor dining is only permitted in restaurants in hotels on Abaco and New Providence.
- Special provisions for the Christmas Season from 24th December 2020 to 3rd January on Abaco, Grand Bahama, Mainland Eleuthera, Mainland Exuma and New Providence are:
 - Church services may be held after the 10:00 pm curfew time.
 - Social gatherings may be held with a maximum of 10 persons.

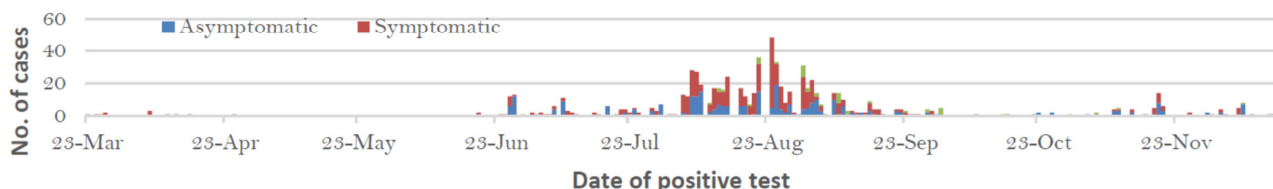


Turks and Caicos Islands (TCI)

- Protocols related to social distancing, wearing of masks and other related measures including screening for travel have been extended to 31st March 2020.
- Weekly Taskforce meetings continue with Compliance Officers disbursed throughout the islands.
- Emphasis was placed on businesses, public and social gatherings to shutdown at 12 midnight daily.
- Occupancy in bars and restaurants should not exceed 30% of the original occupancy level and is applicable to both indoor and outdoor space. The occupancy level is determined by the Environmental Health Department.

Figure 1: Symptomatic and Asymptomatic TCI COVID-19 cases by date of positive test

March 23 - December 16, 2020



NATIONAL RESPONSE

The Bahamas Ministry of Health (MOH)

- There has been a slight increase in the daily number of new confirmed cases of COVID-19 throughout the Commonwealth of The Bahamas.
- The national authorities continue to require negative real time PCR tests from arriving travelers and rapid antigen testing five and ten days post entry for all in-coming travelers, including citizens and residents.
- Daily laboratory testing continues at the National Reference Laboratory (NRL), PMH, Rand Memorial Hospital and private sector laboratories.
- The Contact Tracing Command Centre is still operational and an on-line contact tracing course continues to be offered through the University of The Bahamas (UB).
- Preparatory work continues towards developing the National COVID-19 Vaccine Plan, with support from PAHO.
- A SharePoint platform is utilized for multiple user entry of contact tracing data, case investigation and laboratory test results whilst Go.Data is used for epidemiology analysis of a subset of exported data variables.
- Moderate to severe, suspected and confirmed cases are treated at PMH, Doctors Hospital West and Rand Memorial Hospital.
- The Public Hospital's Authority continues to distribute PPEs across all public hospitals and clinics.
- MOH continues to provide telemedicine, telepsychology, mental health, and psychosocial support services.
- MOH continues to implement a communication campaign to increase immunization coverage for influenza and other vaccines.

Turks and Caicos Islands (TCI) Ministry of Health

- There has been an increase in the daily number of new confirmed cases of COVID-19. As of 17th December 2020, 54% of cases were contacts of known cases, 43% were of unknown origin, and 3% were imported cases.
- The National Public Health Laboratory continues to conduct COVID-19 PCR testing and 10,953 tests were completed to date. Testing has been expanded to include "frontline" workers and community-based testing.
- Preparatory work continues for developing the National COVID-19 Vaccine Plan, with support from PAHO.
- Community drive-thru testing for COVID-19 continued in Providenciales and at "walk-up" sites on other islands.
- Go.Data is being utilized for field data collection and contact tracing investigations.
- A Cuban health contingent of 20 persons continues to operate in medical facilities through a bilateral agreement between the two countries.

PAHO/WHO RESPONSE

- PAHO continues to provide both The Bahamas and Turks and Caicos Islands with access to updated technical guidelines and technical assistance.

- Both The Bahamas and Turks and Caicos Islands participated in a training workshop for the introduction of COVID-19 Vaccines including Cold Chain Management on 17th December 2020.

The Bahamas

- PAHO Country Office personnel remain embedded within The Bahamas' MOH Emergency Operating Centre (EOC) to provide technical advice.
- Three staff members provide data management support to MOH, assisting with coordination of data entry for cases, contacts and laboratory tests and with standardizing of analysis and reporting.
- A PAHO led Infection Prevention Control Training course was completed by 36 physicians and nurses from MOH, Public Hospitals Authority, and Department of Public Health.
- PAHO's regional and country office HSS and EOC groups have advised the MOH on expanding acute care services in three hospitals and adjusting workflow and workplace layout to minimize risks of COVID-19 infection.
- PAHO Country Office personnel continue to participate in MOH's planning committee for developing the country's COVID-19 Vaccination Strategy and plan.

Turks and Caicos Islands

- PAHO continues to provide technical assistance and access to technical guidelines, information and communication products, has advised on contact tracing and data management and made donations of PPE. A weekly virtual meeting is convened between MOH and PAHO for discussion of the technical cooperation programme.
- A PAHO led Infection Prevention Control Training course ended with 20 personnel completing the course.

GAPS/CHALLENGES

- Public compliance with and enforcement of public health protocols are challenges in both countries.
- Surges in travel-related cases and virus transmission among nationals and residents occurred in both countries after the re-opening of international borders, however, within-country transmission of COVID-19 currently accounts for most of the confirmed cases in both countries.
- Tropical storms and hurricanes pose a risk to COVID-19 response efforts.

The Bahamas

- A tented patient facility donated by Samaritan's Purse increased health care capacity in New Providence. However, there are still concerns about insufficient capacity for handling severe cases.
- COVID-19 testing has been expanded in both the public and private sectors to cope with increased demands for testing. Many sites have started using antigen tests, before MOH disseminated guidance on the subject. Reporting of antigen test results compounds on-going challenges with coordination and timely receipt of results from all laboratories and test sites.
- There has been a decline in infections and requirements for isolation/quarantine of frontline health, security service and other sector workers.

Turks and Caicos Islands

- The decline in confirmation of new cases has decreased the workload for contact tracers. The Ministry of Health has initiated community-based COVID-19 testing.
- Stigma and discrimination by public towards COVID-19 confirmed and suspected cases.