

Situation in The Bahamas & Turks and Caicos Islands 14th January 2020.

On 30th January 2020 the World Health Organization (WHO) declared Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) a public health emergency of international concern. As of 14th January 2021, there were 91,120,307 cases and 1,970,842 deaths reported globally. The Region of the Americas accounted for 40,548,449 confirmed cases and 940,455 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 7th January 2020, there were 63 newly confirmed cases.

Among the new cases:

- Sixty-three percent were from New Providence;
- 35 males, 27 females and 1 unknown.

Among total confirmed cases:

- 56,061 real time PCR (RT-PCR) tests have been conducted to date.

Turks and Caicos Islands (TCI)

Since 7th January 2020, there were 106 newly confirmed cases.

Among the new cases:

- Ninety-two percent were from Providenciales.

Among total confirmed cases:

- 537 (52.1%) males, 492 (47.8%) females and 1 (0.1%) unknown gender (data to 13th January 2021);
- The age distribution of all cases (data to 13th January 2021) is 0-5 (3.4%), 6-19 (11.0%), 20-29 (19.8%), 30-39 (26.0%), 40-49 (21.5%), 50-59 (11.8%), 60-79 (5.9%), 80 and over (0.5%), unknown (0.1%);
- 595 persons are quarantined/home isolation;
- 12,710 real time PCR (RT-PCR) tests have been conducted to date.

The Bahamas

Island	Confirmed cases	Deaths
New Providence	5819	136
Grand Bahama	1158	24
Abaco	206	3
Eleuthera	157	1
Exuma	121	1
Bimini/Cat Cay	83	2
Berry Islands	47	1
Inagua	19	0
Andros	24	0
Long Island	11	0
Cat Island	8	0
Acklins	7	0
San Salvador	9	0
Crooked Island	6	0
Mayaguana	3	0
Pending	354	7
TOTAL	8032	175

Turks and Caicos Islands

Island	Confirmed cases	Deaths
Providenciales	941	5
North Caicos	20	0
Parrot Cay	11	0
Grand Turk	87	1
South Caicos	3	0
TOTAL	1062	6

SITUATION IN NUMBERS

TOTAL CASES

8032 Bahamas
1062 Turks & Caicos
Confirmed

1280 Bahamas
192 Turks & Caicos
Active Cases

6525 Bahamas
862 Turks & Caicos
Recovered

4 Bahamas
4 Turks & Caicos
Hospitalized

1 Turks & Caicos
Positive Cases that Left Country

175 Bahamas
6 Turks & Caicos
COVID-related Deaths

37 Bahamas
Non-COVID-related Deaths

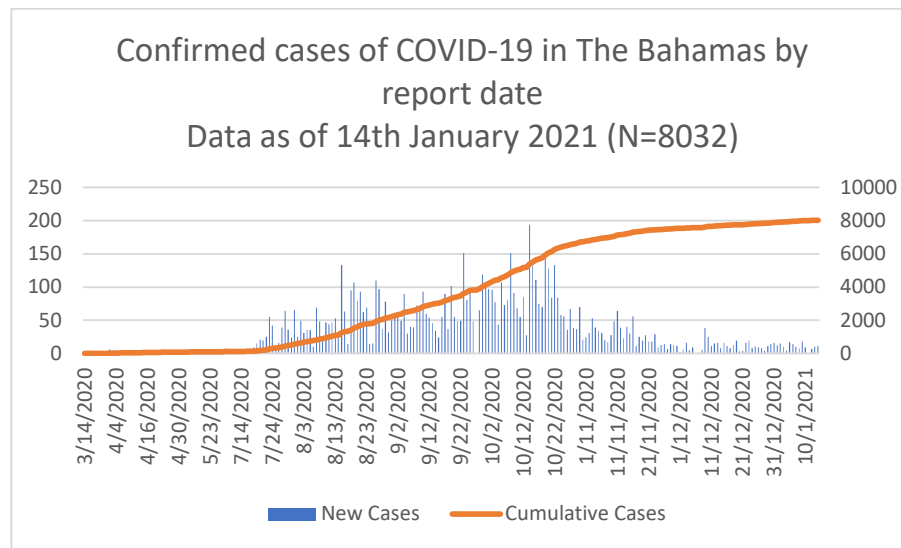
15 Bahamas
Deaths under investigation

PAHO RESPONSE

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

The Bahamas

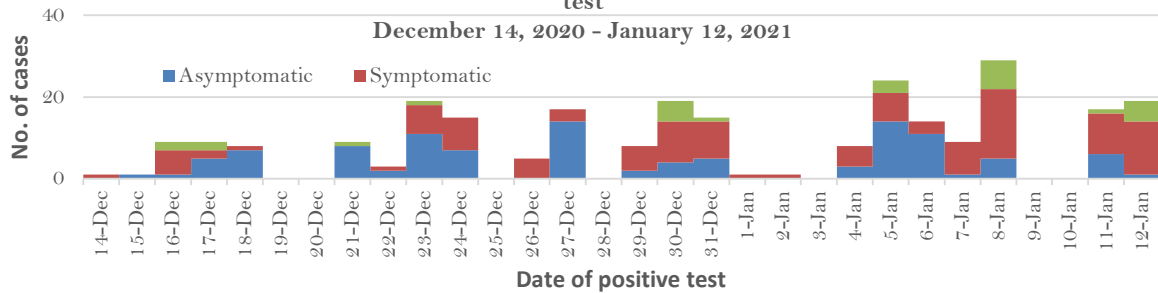
- Emergency Orders have been extended to 31st January 2021.
- Nightly curfews continue for Abaco, Grand Bahama, Mainland Eleuthera, Mainland Exuma and New Providence from 10:00 pm to 5:00 am, Mondays to Sundays.
- A COVID-19 Vaccine Consultative Committee was appointed to advise the National Immunization Coordinating Committee and the National Immunization Technical Working Group in anticipation of the COVID-19 vaccine rollout.



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.
- On Grand Turk, effective 13th January 2021, daily business closures at 7 pm and nightly curfew from 8pm to 5am.
- On Providenciales, daily business closures from 10 pm extended until 27th January 2021.
- Effective 13th January 2021 to 27th January 2021, no gatherings of any kind on any island.
- COVID-19 vaccine (Pfizer) distribution commenced on 11th January 2021.
- Turks and Caicos Islands residents wishing to receive the COVID-19 vaccine must register to do so via an online portal. Preference for distribution will be given to frontline workers, persons over 55 years old, and persons with chronic non-communicable diseases.

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



NATIONAL RESPONSE

The Bahamas Ministry of Health (MOH)

- Daily report of new confirmed cases of COVID-19 continue in 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. However, at a recent press conference MOH indicated that approximately 40% of travelers have not complied with the policy of testing following entry into the country.
- COVID-19 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, although with a decrease in the number of volunteer contact tracers. An on-line contact tracing course continues to be offered through the University of The Bahamas (UB).
- 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.
- Preparatory work continues towards developing the National COVID-19 Vaccine Plan, with support from PAHO.
- Work has started on planning a communication campaign for COVID-19 vaccine introduction.

Turks and Caicos Islands (TCI) Ministry of Health

- There has been an increase in the daily number of new confirmed cases of COVID-19, with notable increase on Grand Turk. New confirmed cases are linked to social gatherings and workplace exposures.
- 300 COVID-19 vaccines were delivered during the first week of distribution to a myriad of persons including frontline workers, officials, and community persons.

- The Grand Turk Clinic was closed as well as community testing on Grand Turk cancelled on several days of this past week to allow for contact tracing efforts on the island.
- Go.Data is being utilized for field data collection and contact tracing investigations.
- Community drive-through services continue to provide access to COVID-19 tests throughout the islands.
- The National Public Health Laboratory continues to conduct COVID-19 PCR testing and 12,710 tests were completed to date. Testing has been expanded to include “frontline” workers and community-based testing.
- The National COVID-19 Vaccine Plan is being implemented – work having been expedited in line with the receipt of Pfizer vaccine. A national committee and a technical task force are supporting vaccine introduction policy development and implementation.
- A communication campaign has been launched and communication materials on the COVID-19 vaccine are being shared via traditional and social media.
- 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 to technical assistance.
- WHO/PAHO briefing documents have been shared with both countries on COVID-19 vaccination and the emergence of COVID-19 mutant strains in different locations.

The Bahamas

- There has been a decrease in the frequency of EOC meetings. PAHO continues to share global and regional data and technical documents with MOH.
- 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 was completed by 20 personnel from MOH.

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.

- The 2020 hurricane season ended uneventfully.
- There is a new risk to both The Bahamas and Turks and Caicos Islands from the emergence of mutant COVID-19 strains in large numbers in the United Kingdom and South Africa with evidence of spread through travel to other countries.
- CARPHA has advised Caribbean countries that it is offering genomic sequencing for COVID-19 strains through collaboration with a researcher at the University of the West Indies. Neither The Bahamas nor Turks and Caicos Islands have in-country sequencing capacity. Furthermore, The Bahamas normally experiences significant challenges to refer biological samples to CARPHA and will be exploring alternative options through PAHO.

The Bahamas

- A tented patient facility donated by Samaritan's Purse remains available in New Providence for expanded clinical capacity.
- COVID-19 testing is now offered in both the public and private sectors, both real time PCR and SARS CoV-2 antigen testing are offered with a requirement to report positive results and workload through the national COVID-19 surveillance system.
- 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

- There appears to be a surge in confirmed COVID-19 cases in Grand Turk. Responsive contact tracing and epidemiological investigations are on-going.
- Stigma and discrimination by public towards COVID-19 confirmed and suspected cases.
- "Roll out" of COVID-19 vaccines is on-going and it will be important to document country experiences and lessons learned.